NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**THE ARAB MEDIA: LOCALIZING
ITS DEMOCRATIC POTENTIAL**

by

Andrew Nicholas Moulis

September 2010

Thesis Co-Advisors: Anne Marie Baylouny
            Anshu Chatterjee

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THE ARAB MEDIA: LOCALIZING ITS DEMOCRATIC POTENTIAL

Andrew Nicholas Moulis
Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy
B.S., United States Naval Academy, 1996

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
September 2010**

Author: Andrew Nicholas Moulis

Approved by: Anne Marie Baylouny
                      Thesis Co-Advisor

                      Anshu Chatterjee
                      Thesis Co-Advisor

                      Harold A. Trinkunas, PhD
                      Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

The role of the media in society is an important consideration for policymakers and analysts when creating and implementing policies. In the Middle East, the Arab media's role in society has emerged as a crucial concern for U.S. policymakers who examine its potential to aid in social and democratic movements. The media provides the means to connect democratic movements to the both the masses and to the regimes in power; it is an important communication channel. The Middle East, despite the increase in the number of media outlets since 1991, has yet to experience a systemic change towards democracy or generate viable social movement organizations. Why has the media not promoted democracy in the Middle East as it has in other parts of the world? By comparing the relevant aspects of social movement theory and democratic media theory with the issues and events being covered by the Arab media, I demonstrate the Arab media does not provide viable support for sustained social movements or democracy. Specifically, I argue that the media has not aided the critical relationship between social movement organizations and democratic development due to the nature of its audience and subsequent focus on regional and pan-Arab issues. This is not to suggest that Arabs are indifferent towards democracy or local issues; rather, pan-Arabism is a significant consideration for the media due to the audience structure of the non-censored media in the Arab world.

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I. THE ARAB MEDIA: LOCALIZING ITS DEMOCRATIC POTENTIAL

A. IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA

The role of the media in society is an important consideration for policymakers and analysts when creating and implementing policies. The U.S. Department of State's Strategic Plan demonstrates the policy importance of the media and addresses its role and value in sustaining civil society, communicating U.S. culture and diplomacy abroad, and influencing democratic development.[1] In the Middle East, the Arab media's role in society has emerged as a crucial concern for U.S. policymakers, who accuse the media of fomenting anti-Americanism.[2] Additionally, analysts examine the media's potential to aid in social and democratic movements in the Arab region. President Barack Obama's 2010 National Security Strategy recognizes that the media is a critical component to "ensuring that the social and economic needs and political rights of people in [the Middle East]… are met."[3] In mainstream media theory, the media serves as an integral link between social movements and democracy, and provides the necessary resources to create and sustain both types of organizations.[4] The Middle East, despite the increase in the number of media outlets since 1991, has yet to experience a systemic change towards democracy or generate viable social movement organizations. Why has the media not promoted democracy in the Middle East as it has in other parts of the world? Instead of some cultural aversion to democracy, the relationship between the media, democracy, and social movements that cause Middle East media difficulty in playing a democracy-

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[1] State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development, "Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2007–2012," May 2007, http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/dosstrat/2007.

[2] Bill Sammon, "Bush Press Secretary Rips Arab Press," *The Washington Times*, April 11, 2002, LexisNexis Academic, http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.nps.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/.

[3] White House, National Security Strategy of the United States of America, May 2010, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf.

[4] Miklos Sukosd, "Democratic Transformation and the Mass Media in Hungary: From Stalinism to Democratic Consolidation," in *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 144–146; Erik C. Nisbet, "Media Use, Democratic Citizenship, and Communication Gaps in a Developing Democracy," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 20, no. 4 (2008): 454–462.

supporting role. Specifically, I argue that the media has not aided the critical relationship between social movement organizations and democratic development due to the nature of its audience and subsequent focus on regional and pan-Arab issues.

The media played a significant role in the formation and development of meaningful democracy in the West. The development of the print media in Western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created a formalized institution to act as a 'watchdog' to emerging democratic governments for its citizens. A similar role for the Arab media, however, has not emerged. Despite numerous media outlets in the region, the Arab media has not evolved to play the same role as its Western counterpart. The influence and control of the terrestrial and domestic media by Arab governments has historically stifled any function of media as a fourth estate, which is an important element in the formation and development of democratic institutions. The appearance of an independent, transnational media and satellite television since 1995, that challenged the message presented by the state-controlled media institutions, have encouraged informative and enlightened debate and discussion among an Arab audience in ways similar to Western media systems, without, however, the social movement and democratic results of those Western countries.

The emergence of a transnational media in the Middle East—one which is shattering the taboos, traditions, and purpose of its terrestrial counterpart—is causing many to consider the media's role in generating significant pressure on Arab regimes to establish democracy in the region.[5] In this thesis, however, I argue that the Arab media's coverage of regional and pan-Arab affairs ignores the issues and grievances that traditionally mobilize and sustain social movement activity. In turn, this lack of social movement activity does not aid democratic activism. This regional focus is due to the nature of the media in the Arab world, which are either transnational media or censored

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[5] Madeline Albright and Vin Weber, "The Right Path to Arab Democracy," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/08/AR2005060800354.html; Robin Wright, "Al-Jazeera Puts Focus on Reform; Mideast Coverage by Network Reviled in Washington is Boon for Bush," *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A45555-2005May8.html; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, *Analysis: Al- Jazeera—TV Channel or Force for Arab Reform?*, July 15, 2004, LexisNexis Academic, http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.nps.edu/hottopics/lnacademic.

national media. The reasons for regional coverage in the Arab media are two-fold. First, regional and pan-Arab coverage connects Arabs across the Middle East to common issues and concerns; the media is catering to audience demand because the audience is regional, not national or local due to national censorship laws. National issues will not interest an audience that includes Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia—only common Arab issues will. Second, Arab regimes permit coverage of regional issues—Iraq, Israel, U.S. foreign policy—over thorny local issues including democratic demands, because such issues divert attention away from local problems. By investigating social movement theory, I demonstrate that there are specific issues and events that must be communicated across populations in order to successfully connect affected people or groups together in the pursuit of democratic goals. Through examination of both social movement theory and democratic media theory, I demonstrate that there is a critical link between social movements, the media, and democratic activism. Social movements provide the necessary resources, skills, and associations to facilitate democratic activism. The media provides the means to connect democratic movements to both the masses and to the regimes in power; it is an important communication channel. In the Middle East, however, the media does not serve in this capacity because the regional issues and events communicated by the transnational media are a product of both the market desires of a large pan-Arab audience and the pervasiveness of the pan-Arab frame. Therefore, by comparing the relevant aspects of social movement theory and democratic media theory with the issues and events being covered by the Arab media, I demonstrate the Arab media does not provide viable support for sustained social movements or democracy. This is not to suggest that Arabs are indifferent towards democracy or local issues; rather, pan-Arabism is a significant consideration for the media due to the audience structure of the non-censored media in the Arab world.

B.   LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE ARAB MEDIA

Until recently, the scholarly literature on the origins, development, and role of the media in the Middle East was significantly lacking. Most of the literature contained a heavily Western-focused analysis and lacked insight into the both the origins of the Arab

media and its potential as a transformative medium. With the emergence of transnational media outlets—such as al Jazeera—and their ability to stimulate debate among audiences in the Middle East, however, the Arab media literature deficit is rapidly changing. William A. Rugh provides a historical analysis of the various factors that have shaped the development of the Arab media in the region. His analysis provides an in-depth perspective on the evolution of Arab media in the region's post-independence period and its co-existence with Arab regimes and governments. While Rugh addresses the lack of a watchdog role as one of the failings of the Arab language media, he does not elaborate or speak to the potential for the emergence of a fourth estate function.[6] Although his work concentrates mostly on the inherent problems—economic, social, and political—within the Arab media, it does provide a necessary foundation for understanding the media's origins and its sustained relationship with Arab governments within the region's political environment.

A second important work on the Arab language media, by Marc Lynch, addresses the impact of transnational broadcasting within the region. Lynch's detailed work focuses on the impact of the transnational communication sector—specifically, al Jazeera—and its development of an Arab public sphere in the region. Central to Lynch's argument is an understanding of the development of the public sphere as proposed by Jurgen Habermas. In his work on the development of the public sphere in Western Europe, Habermas argued that the coffee houses and salons of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe were the venues that formalized public debate and discussion, ranging initially from art and literature to, eventually, politics and society.[7] The net impact of these venues was three-fold; they introduced "a kind of social intercourse that… disregarded status altogether," developed a dialogue in areas previously not questioned, and established a means by which the public could participate in the workings of society

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[6] William A. Rugh, *Arab Mass Media: Newspapers, Radio, and Television in Arab Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2004), 10–11.

[7] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry in a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 32–33.

and government.[8] A public discourse, similar to the one that emerged in Western Europe and helped with the democratic transition, has failed to materialize in the Middle East. As Lynch points out, "the mobilizational media characteristic of authoritarian Arab states… [were] the antitheses of a public sphere, with a single voice driving out all dissent, question, and political reason."[9] The legacy of the traditional role of the Arab media continues to stifle its role in enhancing civil society and encouraging democracy.

The introduction of satellite communication technologies, however, challenges the Arab states monopoly over the communication channels. Much in the way print media excited discussions in the coffee houses and salons of Europe, satellite television and the "political arguments" of its programming has created and sustained what Lynch terms "an Arab public sphere."[10] While his book focuses mostly on the relationships between Al Jazeera, Iraq, and Arab politics, Lynch suggests that expectations and actions of the emerging "new Arab public" is providing the foundations for "a more liberal, pluralist politics rooted in a vocal, critical public sphere."[11] A key component of Lynch's argument is the emergence of a new political environment, which, among others, holds the potential for a regional or transnational media to assume the role of fourth estate. Much in the literature focuses on the space being created by the innovative and new programming featured on such networks as al Jazeera. Al Jazeera's popularity—and notoriety—stems from it being "witheringly critical of Arab regimes as it is opposed to certain pillars of American foreign policy," which has helped to create a discourse among Arab audiences.[12] While this newly created space is important, little attention has been given to the media's content as it relates to benefiting specific social movements and democratic activism. While the emergence of a new political environment is a central

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[8] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry in a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 36–37. The print media was an integral part of this process as it injected the topical content for debate and discussion.

[9] Marc Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 32. For a detailed explanation of the mobilizational characteristics of the Arab press, see Chapters 2 and 3 in Rugh's *Arab Mass Media*.

[10] Ibid., 41.

[11] Ibid., 2–3.

[12] Marc Lynch, "Watching al-Jazeera," *The Wilson Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2005): 36–37.

component to the rise of the fourth estate, the location of the issues and grievances that the media—whether terrestrial or transnational—addresses becomes the foundation for sustained, productive social movements in which they are able to engage and shape a favorable, democratic environment.

C.   RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE MEDIA

Social movement organizations and the media share a unique and often beneficial relationship. The media can provide social movements advertising, communication, protection, public space, and recruitment. Social movements, in turn, provide the media with information, counter-narratives to events, and alternatives to mainstream opinion. The media also creates the medium for social movements to communicate and force transactions between various actors on both sides. In certain political, economic, and social environments, the "transaction between movements and media [becomes] a negotiation over meaning" and, ultimately, "a struggle over framing."[13] The media also presents an opportunity for social movement organizations to expand membership and broadcast their issues across a wider audience. These opportunities are essential to "reducing the isolation of movements for political change… by facilitating detours around obstructions created by governments."[14] Consequently, the relationship between the media and an organization is crucial. Social movement organizations must learn to work in such environments and develop strategies that will allow them to effectively compete and communicate within the existing media structure.

Why is the media important to social movements? The ability of a movement to effectively communicate its message is essential to its credibility, sustainment, and viability as an organization. The movement's message is not only communicated across audiences—both participants and non-participants—but by addressing the movement's message, the media can legitimate both the cause and the organization. The media also

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[13] William A. Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld, "Movements and Media as Interacting Systems," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 528 (July 1993), 117–118.

[14] Philip Seib, "New Media and Prospects for Democratization," in *New Media and the New Middle East*, ed. Philip Seib (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 2.

has the ability to influence attitudes and opinions. While researching American attitudes toward public opinion, Iyengar and Hinder found that the "problems that receive prominent attention on the national news" are often regarded by the viewing public as the nation's most important issues.[15] The media also creates space for debate, discussion, and dialogue among a variety of different actors. This space is a critical element for the creation of a public sphere, which "functions as an intermediary between the political regime and society."[16]

Are social movements important to the media? The intuitive answer may be no; with numerous conflicts, regional developments, and other issues the media are often consumed with events. The exchange between social movement organizations and the media, however, is a necessary and important transaction between the two entities. In order for the media to be viewed as an independent and reliable source of information, they must cover both sides of the issues. In developed and democratic societies, where there is a great deal of media freedom, the media becomes a reliable source of information and public opinion while "in authoritarian systems where many people mistrust state-controlled media."[17] Presentation of alternate frames of information or episodes, which is provided by social movements, increases the media's credibility, journalistic integrity, and legitimates itself with its audience, as well as proving viable to operate as a 'watchdog' organization. In authoritarian environments, however, this is not an easy task to accomplish. Failure to participate in this process leads to accusations of bias and regime cooptation.

D.   ROADMAP

The issues and events that Arab media organizations choose to cover do not support democratic transition, social movement activity, or serve as a watchdog to the

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[15] Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 16.

[16] Carola Richter, "The Effects of Islamist Media on the Mainstream Press in Egypt," in *Arab Media: Power and Weakness*, ed. Kai Hafez (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 46.

[17] Kai Hafez, "Introduction," in *Arab Media: Power and Weakness*, ed. Kai Hafez (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 8.

governments or regimes in power. While the transnational media was instrumental in the creation of public space and continues to provide a viable forum to debate issues and events that unite and define the Arab community, their inability to cover localized grievances and issues—whether due to market demand, intervention by Arab regimes, or other barriers—has stagnated the prospects of bringing democracy to the region. Through examination of social movement theory, I will demonstrate that localized issues and grievances directly influence a movement's ability to effectively engage in democratic activism. Additionally, I will show that a critical link exists between social movements, the media, and democracy. The intent of this thesis is to help highlight the importance of localized issues vis-à-vis social movement organizations and explain the Arab media's deficiency in its coverage.

In Chapter II, I investigate theories involving the roles of media in democratic and non-democratic societies. A brief history of the Arab media is also presented in order to provide an outline of the challenges and impediments towards meeting democratic expectations in the region. Discussion of these theories and exploration of the evolving media in the Middle East are essential to understanding the potential of the Arab media and how it could succeed in transforming itself into a viable and credible media outlet with respect to democratic activism.

In Chapter III, I examine many of the leading social movement theories with respect to explaining how and why people assemble, form, and engage in civic and social activism. These theories, as well as an exploration of the components of collective activism, demonstrate the necessary elements to initiating and sustaining social movements that benefit democratic activism. This will provide the theoretical framework for understanding how social movement organizations in the Middle East can effectively operate in the Arab media environment.

In Chapter IV, I present the connections, interactions, and complications among Arab media outlets, social movement organizations, and democracy. Successful social movement strategies in various social and political structures provide insight into how

organizations and civil society can successfully operate in various media environments. With this as a background, I will then explain why current Arab media systems will not support or sustain viable democratic activism or social movement activity.

In the final chapter, I will summarize my research and identify some of the potential criticisms my research may encounter. For example, the expansion and impact of the internet and social media outlets report and frame issues different from the mainstream media outlets. I will address these types of issues and highlight the importance of the current research and my findings.

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II. ARAB MEDIA

In this chapter, I explore the role of the media in political environments. The literature on the media's role in a government or society is broad and plentiful, with ample scholarly material focusing on the watchdog functions that the media performs in a democratic society. Material specifically addressing the potential prospect for media to perform a watchdog role in non-democratic regimes or societies, in comparison, is significantly limited due to the fact that the media freedoms are suppressed in such regimes or that the state owns the media. In order to understand how the media can benefit social movement organizations and their efforts to facilitate democratic activism, it is important to examine and understand the characteristics, traits, structures and shortcomings of the media found in both democratic societies and non-democratic governments. First, the role of the media in democratic societies will be explored; specifically, the divisions in the literature with respect to the media's role and its strengths and weaknesses. Second, the origins and development of the Arab media is evaluated in order to understand its current function in Arab regimes. The recent development of a vibrant regional Arab media is also examined in order to understand how it compares—and differs—from its domestic counterpart. Finally, I conclude with a brief analysis of the Arab media as whole and determine where it is currently situated in the Middle East media landscape. This analysis is important because it defines the media's role and purpose in society and how it may facilitate—and sustain—democratic activism. Additionally, the various influences that shaped the development of the Arab media are addressed in order to provide insight into why it does not support social movements or democratic development.

A. ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SOCIETY

What is the media's role in a democratic society? According to scholars, the media plays a critical role in the establishment and maintenance of regimes. In Western democracies, the media—arguably—serves as an independent organization responsible for keeping its citizens involved in the democratic process. Katrin Voltmer suggests that

there are three influences that "established the normative justification of the political role of the media in western democracies… diversity and the 'marketplace of ideas', information and enlightened citizenship, and public watchdog and government accountability."[18] More succinctly, it provides information to citizens so that they may "make responsible, informed choices" while at the same time providing the means to serve as a "checking function" for elected officials who represent them.[19] Julianne Schultz notes that the media roles created in the nineteenth century—"public forum for debate about the issues of the day; to articulate public opinion and to force governments to consider the will of the people"—continue to shape and define today's media and "remain central to contemporary definitions of the role of the press today."[20] The media, therefore, provides a forum to educate and enlighten the public while serving as the communication link between the government and its citizenry. This is critical to establishing and sustaining democracy as "the role of the press [is] to disseminate information as a way of mediating between the state and all facets of civil society."[21]

The media's role as a watchdog or fourth estate for society is often cited as an essential function. The watchdog role refers to the media's ability to provide citizens information on the performance of their government by informing on the actions of elected officials, serving as a 'check' to the various branches of governments, reporting on military actions and foreign policy decisions, and protecting the public's interests.[22] John B. Thompson notes that the media's 'watchdog' role was created on a view that a

[18] Katrin Voltmer, "The Mass Media and the Dynamics of Political Communication in Processes of Democratization: An Introduction," in *Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies*, ed. Katrin Voltmer (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2006), 5.

[19] U.S. Agency for International Development, *The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1999), 3. http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/pnace630.pdf.

[20] Julianne Schultz, *Reviving the Fourth Estate: Democracy, Accountability and the Media* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30.

[21] USAID, *Role of Media in Democracy*, 3.

[22] Thomas E. Patterson, "The United States: News in a Free-Market Society," in *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 248–249; Bartholomew H. Sparrow, *Uncertain Guardians: The News Media as a Political Institution* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 1–4; Philip Seib, "Politics of the Fourth Estate," *Harvard International Review* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 60–63. A major debate in the literature is the ability of the media to uphold its idealized position as watchdog given its private ownership, market influences, and various political and economic interests.

"free and independent press was a vital safeguard against the despotic use of state power."[23] There are influences, however, that can interfere with the 'watchdog' function and the democratic roles of the media. In the United States, for example, the "commercial and adversarial orientation of the… news media profoundly affect political coverage, mainly in ways that reduce the media's capacity as instruments of public information and debate."[24] While there are valid criticisms of the media and as it continues to evolve, the basic concept and role of the fourth estate remains critical in democratic societies. Julianne Schultz describe the fourth estate as "a crucial political institution, intimately connected to the concerns and preoccupations of its readers" and one of "the original imperatives of the press."[25]

What roles do the media play in an authoritarian setting? The term 'authoritarian' could be used to describe a very particular political system; for the purpose of this thesis, it used to describe any political system or regime that is generally characterized as non-democratic. The media in such cases serves a function as a voice for the ruling elites in these types of political environments. It is often used by those in power to influence the population on a chosen message. In Nazi Germany, for example, the media—press, radio, and film—was used as "an instrument of Goebbels' comprehensive propaganda machine" to broadcast the regime's message.[26] The media becomes the means by which authorities communicate to the masses; however, it is a one-way communication transaction. The media in these environments are used to set the policy and structure the

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[23] John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 250.

[24] Patterson, "United States: News in a Free-Market Society," 253. Patterson cites the interpretive journalist style, the competitive nature of ratings, and the commercial nature of the media as some of the principal ailments of the media in the United States.

[25] Schultz, *Reviving the Fourth Estate*, 3–4.

[26] Leo Bogart, "Media and Democracy," in *Media & Democracy*, ed. Everette E. Dennis and Robert W. Snyder (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 6.

information "with the objective of forming and manipulating nonelite [sic] attitudes and behaviors."[27]   Ultimately, the "degree of repression" by the state will determine the media's role and influence in societal and political affairs.[28]

B.   MEDIA STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS

How effective is the media at performing watchdog roles in society? Given the depth of material, scholars debate not only the media's responsibility in society but its effectiveness at performing many of these functions. The literature is divided into two camps; those that see media as fulfilling its responsibility to society and those that are critical. While both camps generally acknowledge the necessity of some degree of media reform, the dispute occurs in the current capacity and capability of the media to perform a watchdog role. Further analysis of these fault lines is essential in order to understand how the media benefit a social movement organization's ability to promote democratic activism.

Why do the media fail to perform its watchdog role in a democratic society? These critics place the blame of the failure upon the ownership and globalization as the principle culprits associated with the ailing media's demise in a democracy. With respect to ownership, many view the private and corporate control of the media as a significant impediment to meaningful democracy. Robert W. McChesney argues that private control has led to a weak political culture where business and commercial interests determine media content that subsequently undermines meaningful government and democracy.[29] Reflecting on many of Jurgen Habermas' concepts, McChesney points to the rise of the corporate media and its dependence on advertising and circulation revenue as a primary

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[27] Anthony Mughan and Richard Gunther, "The Media in Democratic and Nondemocratic Regimes: A Multilevel Perspective," in *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4.

[28] Kai Hafez, "Globalization, Regionalization, and Democratization: The Interaction of Three Paradigms in the Field of Mass Communication," in *Democratizing Global Media: One World, Many Struggles*, ed. Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 146–148. In his discussion, Hafez uses the terms "soft-authoritarian" and "hard-authoritarian" to describe the degree, which regimes maintain, control over the media. In soft regimes, for example, "gradual press liberalization is allowed." Hard regimes have complete control over the media.

[29] Robert W. McChesney, *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1997), 7.

cause for the elimination of diversity and debate within the media. Ultimately, without diversity, the press cannot effectively assume its historical and necessary position of watchdog for a democratic society. Thompson further echoes this sentiment by explaining that the "traditional liberal theory of the free press" is undermined by the media's dependence on the "highly competitive and increasingly global process of capital accumulation."[30] Thompson is also critical of the state's increasing intervention, in both the media and in society, under the guise of regulating obscenity or in the interests of national security.[31] Additionally, the increasing costs of media production, coupled with the dependence and accumulation of advertising revenue, constrains the creation and availability of alternate venues and opinions. These costs have stifled mediums that operate outside of the mainstream media, which often present an alternative frame or debate to the public. Consequently, it is the elite media, which is commonly referred to as the "mainstream media" or "mass media," that chooses how to frame issues to the public, which "serves the interests of state and corporate power… in a manner supportive of established privilege and limiting debate and discussion accordingly."[32]

Is the media preserving and performing its role as watchdog in a democratic society? Those in this camp generally argue that the media is effectively performing its intended role as a watchdog on the government for its constituents. Many within this literature point to the 'muckraking' episodes of the early twentieth century, the Vietnam War, Watergate, the civil rights movement, and other significant media events during the twentieth century as proof of the mass media's fulfillment of its watchdog role. Numerous counter-arguments are presented to the notion that the media is ailing due to globalization and corporate ownership. Diversity of commercial media, despite ownership, for example, provides viewers numerous choices of outlets, diversity of

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[30] Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture,* 251–252.

[31] Ibid., 253–254. Thompson draws upon the work of John Stuart Mill's essay 'On Liberty.' In preparing his argument, however, Thompson acknowledges that Mill's work contains an ambiguity that could support an argument for state intervention; principally, that state intervention to curb "obscene publications or the disclosure of politically sensitive information 'causes harm to others' or 'is prejudicial to the interests of others'" and therefore could be viewed as a legitimate function of the state.

[32] Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 10.

opinions and debate, and a better overall product.[33] Many within this camp also point out that the excessive control owners and publishers exercised in the nineteenth and early twentieth century's has significantly declined with the increased media markets. Further, the progression of the press in the latter decades of the twentieth century suggests that owners and publishers are "more apt to be criticized for oversimplifying than partisanizing the news."[34]

Does the media's presentation of news and events influence the way the public views or processes particular issues? The media's coverage of issues and events is an important determinant in how people develop opinions with regards to government policy, local and national affairs, and the actions of public officials. Iyengar and Kinder suggest problems or events "become high priority political issues for the public only if they first become high priority news items for the networks.[35] The media prioritizes issues and shapes public opinion through a variety of methods. For example, the media influences public opinion through agenda-setting, which consists of the deliberate placement of news stories in its broadcasts (e.g. the lead story), the editing of news coverage to reflect a certain position, and utilizing the personal or shared experiences of the audience to help highlight a particular national issue.[36] The news story selection may be based on commercial or political interests. For instance, the story may be selected because its gets attention due to being sensationalistic. Additionally, the public's assignment of responsibility for various societal problems, national issues, or events is directly related to the media's framing of news coverage, which Iyengar terms as "framing effects."[37] As such, episodic frames—or news coverage featuring specific events or stories—generally results in accountability being placed on victims or

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[33] Benjamin Compaine, "Global Media," *Foreign Policy*, no. 133 (November–December 2002): 22.

[34] Warren Francke, "The Evolving Watchdog: The Media's Role in Government Ethics," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 537 (January 1995): 115.

[35] Iyengar and Kinder, *News that Matters*, 4.

[36] Ibid., 112–114.

[37] Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible: How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 11. Iyengar defines framing as subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment or choice problems. Framing effects are the changes in decision outcomes as a result of these frames.

perpetrators, while thematic frames—coverage based on generalized or non-specific events—results in responsibility being place on society.[38] These practices, coupled with the media choice to focus on certain issues while overlooking others, ultimately "shape the… public's political priorities."[39] Consequently, the media has significant influence on the public's perception of issues and events and is subject to the market and the owner's intent and point of view. Despite its influences and criticisms, the media plays an important role in the establishment and sustainment of democracy. While scholars debate the impacts of these influences on the media's continued ability to effectively perform its watchdog role, the media serves an important role for democratic societies. The Arab media, however, has yet to develop a similar democratic role. While Arab journalists, editors, and media outlets attempt to perform a watchdog role by providing critical coverage of their governments, Arab regimes continue to imprison or fine those who criticize policy. For example,—in February 2010, two journalists were jailed for criticizing Jordanian foreign policy[40]—assess court decisions,—in March 2008, five journalists jailed for "insulting the judiciary and commenting on its rulings"[41]—or report on government corruption—in May 2010, an Egyptian journalist was charged for commenting on government corruption and domestic policies.[42] Examination of the Arab media's origins, influences, and development will provide insight into why the Arab media does not support democratic development.

C.   ORIGINS OF THE ARAB MEDIA

What are the origins of the Arab media? The development of the domestic Arab media was a result of the political and economic transitions experienced during the

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[38] Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible: How Television Frames Political Issues*, 13–16.

[39] Iyengar and Kinder, *News that Matters*, 33. Iyengar and Kinder's research focuses on the American public's reactions and response to the American media's treatment of news coverage.

[40] Reporters without Borders, *15 Days in Jail for Criticizing Government Policy*, February 11, 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4b7950d31e.html.

[41] Committee to Protect Journalists, *Five Jordanians Sentenced to Three-Month Jail Terms*, March 18, 2008, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48253d7328.html.

[42] Committee to Protect Journalists, *Egyptian Journalist Hamdi Kandil Faces Defamation Charge*, May 20, 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4bfd2b7f23.html.

colonial and post-independence periods in the Middle East. Control of the press was important in these fragile social and political environments as colonial governments imposed censorship laws on Arab journalists, required newspapers to apply for licenses, and—as in the case of the Maghrib—mandated that they adopt the colonial language and customs.[43] While colonial governments recognized the need for a press, they viewed its role only as a means to communicate to "officials in their local administration [the various] laws and regulations imposed from abroad."[44] Despite the measures imposed by colonial governments, and recognizing "the power of the press as a political mobilization instrument and a means of disseminating their political and ideological beliefs," Arab journalists began to use the press to communicate their views and opinions on their nationalist struggles instead of just reporting the news.[45] The rise of Arab nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century further attracted Arab newspapers to the opposition of colonial rule, which, consequently, established a "nationalism/anti-imperialism theme" in the media, which remains strong today.[46] The oppositional nature of the Arab press, however, was short-lived. After independence "the new Arab governments saw in the press a potential and a threat: the press's ability to mobilize public opinion… versus its power to menace the ideological foundations of government.[47] Arab governments continued to apply many of the colonial censorship laws and practices to the Arab press and regulated it "so that it promoted the governments developmental aims," which, consequently, turned the press into "a mere mouthpiece for national governments."[48] The impact of these developments was that Arab governments recognized that the "press was a powerful weapon and they sought to monopolize it."[49]

The social and economic environment also influenced the development of the Arab media. The costs to establish, operate, and sustain newspapers was substantial and

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[43] Noha Mellor, *The Making of Arab News* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 30.

[44] Ibid., 35.

[45] Ibid., 29.

[46] Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*, 6.

[47] Mellor, *The Making of Arab News*, 30.

[48] Ibid., 30–31.

[49] Ibid., 35.

impacted the amount and variety of Arab newspapers. Arab countries consisting of small populations, with low incomes and poor literacy rates, inhibited advertising revenues and circulation for most publishers while simultaneously creating a dependence on subsidies.[50] High illiteracy rates coupled with low advertising revenues "forced newspapers to depend for their survival on subsidies from various political factions, who in return saw in the press an extended channel to promote their principles."[51] While this resulted in a brief period of highly partisan and political Arab newspapers upon independence, which, as Rugh acknowledges, resembled many features of the American press following the American Revolution, this was short lived as Arab governments soon brought them under their control.[52] Despite these measures, private and political newspapers were able to survive; however, Arab governments took "over the exclusive right to patronize the politically important newspapers, excluding political parties and other private groups from patronizing them.[53]

The development of newer and more expensive technologies—specifically radio and television—would further entrench the economic dependence of the media and government control. The introduction of broadcast media abolished the education and literacy requirements for information exchanges, which concerned the fragile post-independence governments with respect to the content and control of information to the masses. This provided regimes with further justification for continued media oversight and control. William A. Rugh points out that after widespread introduction of the broadcast radio medium, Arab governments "increased their influence and control over the mass media in part with the justification that their newly independent nations [faced] overwhelming external and internal problems requiring unity and purposefulness and a minimum of dissent in the public debate."[54] As a result, Arab regimes employed the electronic media to their advantage. In Egypt, Syria, and Libya, for example, radio and

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[50] Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*, 5.

[51] Mellor, *The Making of Arab News*, 29.

[52] Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*, 8.

[53] Ibid., 9.

[54] Ibid., 6–7.

television were under strict government control and used "as instruments to reach and mobilize the mass of the population."[55] In Jordan, Tunisia, and the Gulf States, however, the regimes were "less interested in active social engineering of the masses and therefore they were less intrigued with the media as tools for social change" but recognized "the political importance of the electronic media" and kept it under the control of their respective governments.[56] While used for different purposes, the end result was the same; government oversight of the media.

How did these origins impact the ownership and control of the Arab media? The Arab media, among other institutions, became increasingly dependent upon government subsidizations in the form of funds, benefits, and advertisements. The rentier system established in Arab states, where the "distinction between public service and private interest is often blurred," further exacerbated the situation as government funds became the only way most media outlets could survive.[57] With the state providing "public goods and private favours" without taxation, Arab citizens became "far less demanding in terms of political participation" thus minimizing dissent and opposition.[58] The cementing of government influence and control continued with the development of newer, more sophisticated, and expensive technologies, such as radio and television. Meager Arab advertising revenues, which in 1999 represented less than one percent of the entire world media revenues, are also partly responsible for the necessity of continued government subsidization as the media, even if allowed, lacked the funding to separate and form independent news organizations.[59] In the fragile, post-independence era in the Middle East, newly formed regimes viewed control of information as an essential element to their sustainment and stability—this became especially important with the introduction of

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[55] Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*, 183–184. Rugh divides Arab broadcasting into three classifications: Strict-control (Algeria, Iraq South Yemen, Sudan, Egypt, Syria, and Libya), Loyalist (Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, and North Yemen) and Lebanese Broadcasting. See Chapter 9 for detailed analysis of each individual country.

[56] Ibid., 190.

[57] Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World," in *The Rentier State: Nation, State, and the Integration of the Arab World* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 91.

[58] Ibid., 89.

[59] Jihad B. Khazen, "Censorship and State Control of the Press in the Arab World," *The Harvard International Journal of Press Politics* 4, no. 3 (1999): 89.

radio and television. Since literacy was no longer a requirement to receive, process, and transmit information across a broad audience, radio and television increasingly became viewed as dangerous communication means by unstable regimes and, subsequently, brought this medium under strict government control. This is significant because political participation by citizens is essential for the establishment and sustainment of democracy. The demand for democracy also fuels the media. The media is critical to this process as it serves as the communication link between the people and the authorities and provides information so that citizens can make informed choices. It also, in reverse, informs the state of civil demands. Given the ownership and control patterns stemming from the colonial and independence periods, however, the Arab media did not develop into an institution capable of performing its democratic role. At the same time, the lack of a social movement and media relationship kept opposition away from the media institutions.

While control of information was viewed as vital to the interests of the various regimes of the region, media ownership eventually extended outside the formal control of the government and began to expand to individuals, families, and corporations. While privately-owned, the government controlled these media outlets through indirect methods in order to ensure "loyalty to the basic policies of the regime and to its top leadership."[60] These indirect methods included self-censorship, public policy statements, establishment of a national news agency to guide private media, and informal or private contact with the media to clarify important issues.[61] Saudi Arabia, for example, uses a combination of strict media laws and "its networks of ownership and informal influence" to ensure that coverage is aligned with the regime's agenda.[62] Additionally, regimes established bureaucracies and specialized branches of their governments to specifically regulate and monitor the ownership, content, and control of the media. Ministries of information were established to regulate and define what could and could not be published or broadcast

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[60] Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*, 84.

[61] Ibid, 84–85.

[62] Paul Cochrane, "Saudi Arabia's Media Influence," Arab Media and Society, no. 3 (Fall 2007), http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=421. Cochrane suggests that the Saudi approach is also mirrored in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

within the boundaries of acceptability to the state. While degrees of private ownership varied throughout the region and depended upon regime type, government censorship—whether subtle or overt—pervaded the media and set boundaries and restrictions on the content, limits, and accessibility of the medium.

What was the overall impact of the state's control and influence on the terrestrial Arab media? Despite government claims that control of information in relation to the media was necessary in order to "further the national interest by supporting government policies," the Arab media's content, prestige, and credibility began to decline in both the region and the international community.[63] Rugh describes two types of biases that appear throughout the Arab press; cultural and political. Cultural bias is a "medium's particular slant on the news," which is based on the surrounding "cultural, historic, economic, and social environment."[64] While cultural bias is usually unintentional, it is nonetheless an important aspect of the Arab media and permeates throughout the presentation of the news and is common throughout the region. Additionally, the Arab media provides cultural norms, which they think is most acceptable to the audience. Political bias, however, is a conscious function of the Arab media and presents the news with respect to "prevailing political factors, such as policies and preferences of the government in power."[65] Although political bias occurs in varying degrees across all media organizations, its continued presence suggests that an overt relationship exists between the media and the state. This relationship subsequently caused the media, and the journalism profession, to come under increased criticism and scrutiny by the Arab public. While Rugh cites low salaries and inadequate training as some of the causes of the decline of the journalism profession in the Middle East, the political bias found in the media further perpetuates problems within the Arab press. Additionally, the terrestrial media and its presentation of the news are regarded with "a large measure of defensive skepticism," which has lead to declining sales, audience, and reliability.[66] Consequently,

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[63] Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*, 7.

[64] Ibid., 16–17.

[65] Ibid., 17.

[66] Ibid., 11.

these developments created a negative perception within the Arab public towards the terrestrial media and presented an opportunity for new outlets to provide impartial and unbiased delivery of information to the region.

Government oversight, control, and manipulation of the media are not unique to the Middle East; however, the Arab media's inability to initiate political transformation or develop into a functioning fourth estate is due to unique conditions. While examining the role of the media both during and after General Augusto Pinochet's regime in Chile, Eugenio Tironi and Guillermo Sunkel noted the importance of the alternative media's role in transitioning from authoritarianism to democracy. The Pinochet regime's oversight of the media resembled the characteristics of the Arab media—the establishment of formal government institutions to oversee the censorship and control of the media and the implementation of policies aimed at the "demobilization and depoliticization of the population."[67] Unlike states and societies in the Middle East, however, Chilean social and political organizations effectively utilized alternative media and alternative solutions to counter and criticize Pinochet's regime and were integral to the democratic transition.[68] The Franco regime in Spain also kept tight restrictions on the press and media.[69] During Spain's transition to democracy during the 1960s and 1970s, the media used "international news events as vehicles for the education of Spaniards about the workings and merits of democratic politics" while still operating within existing Spanish censorship practices and press laws.[70] Government involvement in the media is

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[67] Eugenio Tironi and Guillermo Sunkel, "The Modernization of Communications: The Media in the Transition to Democracy in Chile," trans. Richard Gunther, *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 170–172.

[68] Ibid., 173–174. For example, those on the political left used alternative mediums to emphasize "complete rejection of the authoritarian regime and the market regime by operators of media outlets" while moderates sought "to participate in the debate by taking positions with the mainstream of the media system."

[69] Richard Gunther, Jose Ramon Montero, and Jose Ignacio West, "The Media and Politics in Spain: From Dictatorship to Democracy," in *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30–33.

[70] Ibid., 42.

also present in some democracies, as in the case of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which "was created by royal charter" during the interwar years.[71]

Arab states and the alternative media, however, have yet to experience these types of developments. During the Lebanese Civil War, many small media outlets emerged and operated "outside any legal framework" and against the state's media monopoly.[72] Following the war, however, the government implemented restrictive media laws that reduced the total number of media outlets through its control of licenses, providing these to only those stations "whose major shareholders were politicians or parties that did not reject the postwar political system dominated by Syrian tutelage over Lebanon's political life."[73] As a result, the Lebanese government "restricted media pluralism and curtailed free expression, particularly as it relates to political reporting and commentary about its foreign and domestic policies."[74] In Jordan, the regime used less authoritative strategies to deal with oppositional movement and their media. Islamist movements—primarily, the Muslim Brotherhood—and the Jordanian government developed an understanding that regarded each "other as a rival to be dealt with politically rather than an implacable adversary to be crushed."[75] Muslim Brotherhood periodicals and "newspapers associated with the movement" were subjected to strict press laws that were not intended to "suppress the Islamic movement but to create a set of shifting red lines and obstructions that hampered the operations of Islamist organizations but never prevented them from operating."[76] While the oppositional media in Jordan was not crushed, it was effectively

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[71] Holli A. Semetko, "Great Britain: The End of News at Ten and the Changing News Environment," in *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 347. Semetko notes that the BBC is financed by the owners of private television stations, which cause some to question the corporation's cautious coverage of government affairs.

[72] Katharina Notzold, "The Political Elites' Dominance over the Visual Space: A Qualitative and Quantitative Content Study of Lebanese Television," in *Arab Media: Power and Weaknes*s, ed. Kai Hafez (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 126.

[73] Ibid., 126.

[74] "Restrictions on Broadcasting: In Whose Interest?," *Human Rights Watch*, April 1, 1997, http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/lebanon/Lebanon-05.htm#P306_63122.

[75] Nathan Brown, "Jordan and its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?" http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp_74_brown_final.pdf, 3.

[76] Ibid., 5–6.

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marginalized through the regime's strategy that "oscillated between co-optation and repression."[77] Consequently, the Lebanese and Jordanian governments marginalized—or eliminated—alternative and oppositional media in different but effective ways. Alternative and oppositional media in the Middle East have suffered significant setbacks and, subsequently, not aided in democratic development.

D.   DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSNATIONAL MEDIA

What are the origins of the transnational media in the Middle East? The domestic Arab media provided the foundation for a more regionalized flow of information. The stifling economic, political, and social environment in which the terrestrial media operated for most of the twentieth century provided a foundation for transnational media outlets. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 provided the impetus for the introduction of transnational media in the region, as the "stale, turgid and censored coverage available on local Arab stations" could not compete with CNN and other news services covering the occupation and the war.[78]   Additionally, following the Gulf War of 1991, transnational media outlets began to appear as a result of reformation policies implemented by Arab governments as they "confronted Western prescriptions for economic reform and liberalization, involving the sale of state assets and opening of markets to private entrepreneurship."[79]   These domestic liberalization attempts subsequently created an opportunity for the Arab media to provide "limited debates about domestic issues."[80]   These short-lived reforms and the subsequent "rollback of liberalization," however, became the catalyst for the creation of independent media by "displacing political arguments into the transnational arena."[81]

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[77] Brown, "Jordan and its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?," 3.

[78] Naomi Sakr, *Satellite Realms: Transnational Television, Globalization & the Middle East* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 10. Sakr notes that the Arab Satellite Communications Organization (Arabsat) was created in 1976 and launched its first satellite in 1985; however, the technology was rarely used and never realized its full potential as a communication or regional programming venue.

[79] Ibid., 1–2.

[80] Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public*, 38.

[81] Ibid., 40.

One such outlet that formed as a result of domestic reformation attempts was the al Jazeera network. Established in the mid-1990s, the network was created when the newly crowned Qatari Emir, Hamad Bin Khalifa, instituted a series of policies aimed at reforming social, economic, and political policies.[82] While not the first transnational media outlet in the Middle East, al Jazeera quickly became the most popular and a symbol of the potential of this medium and the shifting nature of the Arab transnational media.[83] Covering regional issues spanning from United States military operations in the region to Israeli-Palestinian relations to the undertakings of the al Saud family, the network facilitates a variety of topics that provokes debate and discussion across the region and the world. The financial backing provided by the Qatari ruling family to cover many of the costs associated with creating and operating the network has blurred the lines between government control and private ownership.[84] Despite this blur, the innovative nature of the network's programming and content has caused many to consider the democratic implications the station—and on a broader scale, the Arab transnational media—could have on the region.

What is the impact of the transnational media? First, it has created a media market where consumers have a choice among information and its sources. The diversity in content and channels has created a situation where "programming does not simply meet the needs of the government, but rather actively seeks viewers who enjoy a variety of news and entertainment options."[85] Second, the quality and availability of Arab journalists have increased. Live televised debates and other new formats and genres in the Arab transnational media have "contributed to the increasing professionalism among Arab journalists."[86] Third, the reliability and relative trustworthiness associated with the

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[82] Louay Y. Bahry, "The New Arab Media Phenomenon: Qatar's Al-Jazeera," *Middle East Policy* 8, no. 2 (2001): 88–89.

[83] Saban Center for Middle East Policy, "Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development University of Maryland/Zogby International 2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," http://bsos.umd.edu/SADAT/.

[84] Mohammed El-Nawawy and Adel Iskander, *Al-Jazeera: How the Free Arab News Network Scooped the World and Changed the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2002), 88.

[85] Jon B. Alterman, "Transnational Media and Regionalism," *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*, no. 1 (Fall 1998), http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall98/Articles1/JA1/ja1.html.

[86] Mellor, *The Making of Arab News*, 10.

Arab transnational media has increased. This credibility extends not only to the Arab's in the region but also to those abroad in the international community. Sahar Khamis, and others, suggests this "could have positive implications on the Arab media's international image and their ability to effectively communicate with the outside world."[87] Finally, the creation and emergence of public space for Arabs to discuss and debate issues once thought to be taboo. The "new Arab public," which Marc Lynch uses to describe the public space in the Middle East, "has shattered the state's monopoly over the flow of information, rendering obsolete the ministries of information and the oppressive state censorship that was smothering public discourse well into the 1990s."[88]

E.   CONCLUSION

Where is the Arab media currently 'located' in the media landscape? The Arab media has long been a controversial source of information in the Middle East. Subject to censorship, political influence, and multiple biases, the terrestrial media of most Arab countries has been historically identified as a largely unreliable information network, which is often viewed as a mouthpiece for the governments, which either directly—or indirectly—control or influence them. While Arab states have utilized and controlled their media organizations for different purposes, the origins, development, and traditional role of the terrestrial media has impacted the substance, content, and function of the entire Arab media network. The economic and political development of the terrestrial media has subsequently led to the continued censorship and government control of information, which has hampered the citizenry's ability to address grievances and establish a meaningful system of democracy. The Arab media evolved from the traditions of the colonial governments prior to independence and continued to develop in the authoritarian, non-democratic regimes that characterized the Middle East governments of the second half of the twentieth century.

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[87] Sahar Khamis, "The Role of the New Arab Satellite Channels in Fostering Intercultural Dialogue: Can Al Jazeera English Bridge the Gap?," in *New Media and the New Middle East*, ed. Philip Seib (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 43.

[88] Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public*, 2.

The recent development of the transnational media, however, has opened up the possibility for different networks of information to be disseminated and debated among audiences. These outlets have created a public space for debate over issues that were once considered taboo or banned from formal propagation. Development of public space via the press in Western European societies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have caused speculation over the potential for the Arab media—and specifically the transnational media—to develop into a similar role as government watchdog or Fourth Estate. Despite the space the Arab media has created and the efforts of numerous Arab journalists, there has been little—if any—progress towards democracy or democratic activism. Additionally, both the Arab terrestrial and transnational media outlets have had minimal impact on social movement organizations, which traditionally provide the resources, planning, and structure for democratic activism. This is evident especially in authoritarian and quasi-authoritarian regimes where localized issues and criticisms of the government are repressed. In other areas, however, there appears to be some progress towards media freedom. In Iraq and Lebanon, for example, the media broadcasts "an array of languages and take up political positions stretching from pro-government to anti-government, Islamist to communist [while] some are extremely partisan, while others are neutral."[89] While these are positive developments for the Arab transnational media, journalists and media outlets in these countries still face difficulties. The Iraqi government closed the al Arabiya office for "using reports that distort facts and that include inaccuracy" leading to the incitement of sectarian violence"[90] while journalists and correspondents in Lebanon face multiple dangers from various political groups and organizations.[91] The link between the media and social movement organizations is critical for the development of democracy and will be further explored in the subsequent chapters.

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[89] David A. Rousu, "Iraq: A Diverse Media," *Arab Media and Society*, no. 10 (Spring 2010), http://www.arabmediasociety.com/countries/index.php?c_article=218.

[90] "Iraq Says Arabiya Office Shut for "Sectarian Incitement," *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, September 7, 2006, LexisNexis Academic, http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.nps.edu/hottopics/lnacademic.

[91] Committee to Protect Journalists, "Attacks on the Press in 2008: Lebanon," February 10, 2009, http://cpj.org/2009/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2008-lebanon.php.

III. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In this chapter, I discuss the importance of social movements and their relation to democratic activism. The study of social movement theory is important to the understanding of how organizations endure and operate in various political environments. Social movement theory provides explanations for what motivates people to join, organize, mobilize, and react to various situations presented by authorities. In order to understand the media's role in promoting a particular movement's agenda, it is essential to understand how movements function in a given social and political environment. In the first part of this chapter, I will examine four prevailing mobilization theories in order to determine the motivation behind the creation and development of social movement organizations. Examination of these theories will provide a common set of elements that present an explanation for collective action. The second part of this chapter will explore these elements in depth and explain their importance in social movement organizations. These elements will be the foundation for examining the media's effectiveness in promoting a movement's goals and message. Finally, I will address the role of social movements and civil society in promoting democratic activism. While social movement organizations can promote democratic activism in a variety of political environments, they also encounter a variety of significant challenges that can impede progress. I will provide a brief exploration of some the challenges that organizations face in the Middle East.

A. SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

There are four prevailing views in social movement theory that suggest various motivations for why people organize, protest, and act. The first, and perhaps oldest theory, suggest that people spontaneously gather in a crowd and act excitedly. This theory held that there was no apparent logic, reason, or organization among the crowd except for the feeling of frustration created from a particular set of grievances among the participants. Mobs often consisted of a variety of participants who "spontaneously"

joined the protest only "if they sympathized with the grievances being expressed."[92] This theory postulated that the participants were the poor and marginalized members of society who lacked the skill, resources, and organization to effectively take action to redress their grievances. Essentially, this theory postulated that groups of aggrieved people came together, without prior coordination, to wildly act upon an injustice or grievance. These episodes became the "mechanisms for alleviating psychological discomfort derived from [the] structural strains" of society.[93] Over time, however, this theory became disproved as it became apparent that sustained protests, and on a larger scale, movements, needed more than just angry people to simultaneously and spontaneously gather in order to succeed; they needed time, money, resources, organization, and skill. Additionally, the poor and marginalized members of society often lacked these pre-requisites and, hence, a new level of analysis was needed to explain beyond the spontaneous gathering theory.

Individual rationality theory emerged as an alternative to the 'spontaneous mob theory' and attempted to explain in depth why people protest and react to grievances. This theory focused mostly on the individuals, or "collectivities considered as if they were decision-making individuals," who made "critical choices… conforming to their imputed interests, resources, and situational constraints."[94] Individuals, or small groups of people, while driven by a particular injustice or set of grievances, only act in their own self interest, which prevents collective action or mobilization on a larger scale. This advanced beyond the 'spontaneous mob theory' by conceding that various actors provided a minimal amount of organization, resources, and skill to the protest. Additionally, theorists accounted for the motives and injustices that impacted aggrieved individuals, or groups, in an attempt to expand beyond the mob. The focus, however,

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[92] Robert B. Shoemaker, "The London "Mob" in the Early Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of British Studies* 26, no. 3 (July 1987): 281–282.

[93] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Introduction: Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 6.

[94] Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21.

remained upon the actions of the actor or group of actors. Individual rationality theory, consequently, did little to explain collective action beyond disconnected groups of people acting upon grievances.

In an attempt to explain mobilization beyond the "grievance-based conceptions" of earlier theoretical models, resource mobilization focused "instead on mobilization processes and the formal organization manifestations of these processes."[95] Resource mobilization emphasizes the organizational and resource capacity of a group and its ability to collectively act together. Shifting focus away from individuals or small groups, this theory began to look at the many variables that allowed aggrieved groups to mobilize and act collectively towards a common goal instead of focusing primarily on the claims that previous theories reasoned for groups acting together. Quintan Wiktorowicz notes that resource mobilization theory holds "movements as rational, organized manifestations of collective actions."[96] While he suggests that "grievances are ubiquitous [while] movements are not" the role of grievances still is, nonetheless, an important consideration in the role of social movements.[97] Consequently, resource mobilization theory held that only those with the proper time and resources—for example, the middle class—will protest, while de-emphasizing the informal bureaucratic activity and grievance-based claims that traditionally motivated people to organize and act.

Finally, a "synthesis" emerged, which combined previous theories through the emphasis of "three broad sets of factors [for] analyzing the emergence and development of social movements/revolutions;" political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing process.[98] This view holds that movements emerge due to an array of factors, which are based on a variety of conditions already present in the environment. Political opportunity refers to "attention on the relationship between the movement organizations

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[95] Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes—Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3–4.

[96] Wiktorowicz, "Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," 10.

[97] Ibid.

[98] McAdam et al., "Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes," 2.

and the state" whereby any shift in this relationship may create an opportunity for the movement to mobilize.[99] Essentially, organized movements will actively seek these opportunities and exploit these to their advantage. Mobilizing structures are the "collective vehicles, informal, as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action."[100] Framing processes are "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action."[101] Consequently, this new synthesis deemphasized individual traits of a movement—actors, resources, or space—and instead looked at all the variables as a whole. Therefore, the opportunities, networks, institutions, cultures, and ideologies present in an environment all contributed to the way in which a movement exists and operates.

B.   COMPONENTS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

The four views presented on social movement theory offer a variety of reasons as to what motivates people to act. While the theories differ on the causes and motivations for protest episodes, they highlight important elements of what brings people together to act collectively. These elements are common across all social movement theories and provide the impetus for collective action. First, there are issues and grievances that effect people—whether as individuals or as groups—and presents a sense of injustice. Without these, there is no motivation or need to act. Second, these issues are identified and advertised to both an otherwise unknowing or uninformed public and to the aggressors or those who are providing the oppression. This not only serves to identify the grievances but also to serve notice to those who are responsible for the injustices. Third, grievances must be localized and have a direct impact upon the population. Grievances must have an impact on people in order for them to consider action. Finally, the effectiveness of an organization is directly related to its ability to successfully manage its resources, communicate its message, and act collectively together as a movement. The acts of

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[99] Charles Kurzman, "Organizational Opportunity and Social Movement Mobilization: A Comparative Analysis of Four Religious Movements," *Mobilization* 3, no. 1 (1998): 23–24.

[100] McAdam et al., "Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes," 3.

[101] Ibid., 6.

individuals or poorly resourced organizations will be ineffective to accomplishing their goals. Therefore, the success of social movement organizations depends on their ability to effectively employ these elements.

The first necessary element in social movement theory is the grievances, or the perceived sense of injustices that effect people. The role and impact of grievances on movements and movement participation is debated throughout the Social Movement Theory literature[102]; however, grievances are nonetheless a necessary component for collective action as it often serves as the inspiration for an organization's formation and development. There are many reasons why people band together, but Sidney Tarrow offers a more precise reason for people participating together for a common purpose. According to Tarrow, the reason people will act collectively in social movements "is to mount common claims against opponents, authorities, or elites" where "common or overlapping interests and values are at the basis of their common actions."[103] The grievances or injustices that make up what Tarrow refers to as "common claims" must be significant enough to bring people together to confront the usually better equipped and better organized authorities. Grievances must also be experienced and legitimated across a constituency in order for the movement to gain and sustain support. If grievances are viewed as trivial or lack popular support, participants will ultimately not take undue risks or "sacrifice their time to social movement activity unless they have good reason to do so."[104] Ultimately, the potential constituents of a social movement organization must be affected by the particular grievance, issue, or concern and perceive it as worth risking movement participation. The impact of a grievance or particular set of grievances on a

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[102] Much of the debate in the literature focuses on the impact of grievances with respect to social structures, participation, and movement development. For a detailed discussion of the role and impact of grievances in various Social Movement Theories, see John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald's *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*; Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action*; Charles Tilly's *From Mobilization to Revolution*.

[103] Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collection Action and Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6.

[104] Ibid.

particular group or population is a critical component within social movements and emphasizes that people usually do not join movements or risk protesting over arbitrary or unimportant issues. Grievances must be localized and have a direct impact on the population.

Second, grievances must also be advertised to a knowing or, otherwise, unknowing public. An integral component of an effective movement strategy is communicating to an audience. The communication, or advertising, of grievances occurs simultaneously across two separate and different audiences. They need to be aired internally, "among social movement organizers and movement participants," and externally, to the "broader public composed of adherents, bystanders, elites, and opponents."[105] Internal communication is necessary to spread information, plans, and instructions across organizational members, in order to strengthen the core supporters of the movement. The external component is equally important as it provides an opportunity for a movement to persuade bystanders to join their cause, advertise and market their injustices, and address authorities with their specific sets of grievances. It allows a particular movement to market their goals to an affected group or populace, which increases both the size and strength of the movement. The media serves as a critical medium to communicate on both levels and, therefore, becomes an important component of a social movement's communication strategy.

In addition to grievances being made known, they must also be recognized and proliferated locally among the citizenry and inhabitants of a particular community. While writing mostly about the food protests of pre-industrial Europe, Walton and Seddon argue that the aim of riots were "to solve short-run problems of supply and price, restore normality to markets, activate relief measures by local officials, or remind merchants of their obligations to consumers."[106] Accordingly, the aims of riots were generated, sustained, and often resolved at the local level. The necessity of localized issues and grievances is evidenced in the participants of riot and protests; those that were

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[105] Peter Brinson, "Liberation Frequency: The Free Radio Movement and Alternative Strategies of Media Relations," *The Sociological Quarterly*, no. 47 (2006): 543.

[106] John Walton and David Seddon, *Free Markets & Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment*, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1994), 29.

affected were the ones that participated. In Europe, for example, women often initiated and participated in food riots because, among other reasons, they were familiar with the local markets, prices, and "practices of food dealers."[107] The objects of riots and protests, therefore, had to directly affect the populace, be tangible, and local; riot or protest episodes did not appear because of issues that occurred outside the localized area or due to abstract grievances. While different theories—such as resource mobilization— often dispute the importance of grievances in social movement organizations, Edward J. Walsh suggests that many theorists agree that "shared grievances and homogenizing ideologies are important preconditions for the emergence of a social movement."[108] Further, the issue of localized grievances was not just applicable to Western Europe or the late-seventeenth century. Javier Auyero's examination of relational riots in Latin America, for example, found that the "grievances [derived] from everyday routines [and] local perceptions of politicians' wrongful conduct" helped to foment and form riots during the early 1990s.[109] Ultimately, in order for people to risk participation the issues must be perceived as legitimate and genuine reasons to protest.

Finally, grievances must be effectively communicated through a central and organized group or structure in order to be adequately addressed by the appropriate authorities. Framing processes are crucial to a movement's existence because they not only "encourage mobilization" but "are held to be both more likely and of far greater consequence under conditions of strong rather than weak organization."[110] The effective communication of grievances by a social movement organization, therefore, depends significantly upon both the framing processes that they employ and the strength of the organization. Critical to a movement's framing strategy is its ability to set an agenda for a targeted group or audience. The concept of agenda setting "works by priming viewers, highlighting certain issues and identifying them as important while neglecting others" so

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[107] Walton and Seddon, *Free Markets & Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment*, 28.

[108] Edward J. Walsh, "Resource Mobilization and Citizen Protest in Communities around Three Mile Island," *Social Problems* 29, no. 1 (October 1981): 1.

[109] Javier Auyero, "Relational Riot: Austerity and Corruption Protest in the Neoliberal Era," *Social Movement Studies* 2, no. 2 (2003): 119.

[110] McAdam et al., "Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes," 8–9.

that the audience can "infer from the media which issues matter."[111] Effective framing processes, coupled with an organized agenda setting strategy, give movements and their constituents an effective voice to meet the challenges of authorities. It provides structure, organization, and unity of conviction across a particular group of aggrieved individuals. As McAdam et al. indicate, however, a well-organized social movement organization is critical to the success of an effective framing strategy. The strength of the movement's message, therefore, lies in the strength and cohesion of the organization's structure. Media theory supports this and suggests that "antagonists with a high level of organization and resources are in a better position to create news because the creation of major events is organizationally expensive."[112] Efficient and resource-rich organizations have a better chance of putting effective pressure on authorities, sustaining mobilization, communicating grievances, and recruiting new membership. Integral to the framing process is how movements view themselves, how to convince "potential participants" to join, and "the ways in which meaning is produced, articulated, and disseminated by movement actors through interactive processes."[113] Ultimately, the strength of the organization and the way in which they frame their messages is critical to the survival of the movement.

C.   ROLE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN DEMOCRACIES

What roles do social movement organizations perform in democratic societies? Social movements create and sustain networks containing people with shared values and ideas who work together in the pursuit of common interests and goals. In democratic societies, "social movements have become part of the environment and social structures

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[111] Marc Lynch, "Political Opportunity Structures: Effects of Arab Media," in *Arab Media: Power and Weakness*, ed. Kai Hafez (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 23.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Gadi Wolfsfeld, *Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19.

[113] Wiktorowicz, "Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," 15.

that shape and give rise to parties, courts, legislatures, and elections."[114] Social movements facilitate these structures by providing them the resources, membership, access, and organization. As movements grow and become legitimated, so too do their ideals and values. This growth is largely dependent upon recruiting those individuals, or networks, which either share these values or are sympathetic to the organization. Consequently, social movements—particularly "pre-existing networks"—are critical to democratic development because they provide "recruits and resources," as well as provide the "glue that holds the movement together."[115] Social movements and democratization also share the same basic belief that "ordinary people are politically worthy of consultation."[116] While many scholars debate whether a set of societal preconditions—economic system, regime type , provision of security—are necessary for democratic activism to prosper, the literature is conclusive over the purpose and utility of social movement organizations in facilitating democracy.

What role does civil society play in creating and sustaining democracy? Social movement organizations are a component of civil society, which can be integral to the formation and sustainment of democracy. Quintan Wiktorowicz defines civil society as a "constellation of associational forms that occupy the terrain between individuals and the state" and are subsequently "credited with numerous transitions to democracy and is frequently offered as a proscriptive remedy to despotic or authoritarian rule."[117] The basic element of civil society is the individual, who, through "the art of association," joins a group with other aggrieved individuals to "collectivize… learn norms of democratic interaction, and create institutions capable of resisting authoritarian power."[118] These institutions—non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charities,

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[114] Jack A. Goldstone, "Introduction: Bridging Institutionalized and Noninstitutionalized Politics," in *States, Parties, and Social Movements*, ed. A. Goldstone (New York: NY, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

[115] Janine A. Clark, "Islamist Women in Yemen: Informal Nodes of Activism," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 164.

[116] Goldstone, "Bridging Institutionalized and Noninstitutionalized Politics," 8.

[117] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Civil Society as Social Control: State Power in Jordan," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (October 2000): 3.

[118] Ibid., 44.

religious organizations, community advocates—work together towards the advancement of a common purpose or goal. As such, civil society in authoritarian environments are viewed as appropriate vehicles for democratic activism because they "help lay the foundations of a democratic culture by disseminating values essential to democracy, including respect for human rights and the rule of law."[119] While civil society can have a positive impact on democracy development in authoritarian environments, it can also adversely impact the process. This is especially tenuous in the Middle East where civil society organizations formed as result of liberalization measures by Arab regimes—which are criticized for co-opting these organizations in order to exercise control—instead of being initiated from below, by society, in response to regime aggression or repression.[120]

D.   ARAB SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

What are the challenges in the Middle East that constrain the formation of a democratic society? There are several factors that hamper democratic activism by social movements in the region. First, the enduring legacy of colonialism has negatively impacted Western "experiments in political liberation" in the region because of the distrust associated with foreign led initiatives.[121] With the colonial experience still in the not-too-distant past, foreign intervention into any democratic process is viewed with skepticism and doubt. Second, the region "has no prolonged prior experience with democracy that might have in place the institutional foundations for popular mobilization."[122] While the necessity of democratic preconditions to be in place in order for democracy to succeed is a widely debated subject, it remains that the region lacks substantial experience with institutions that support democratic activism. Finally, tribal

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[119] Vickie Langhor, "Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics?," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 216.

[120] Wiktorowicz, "Civil Society as Social Control," 44–47.

[121] Eva Bellin, "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 35.

[122] Ibid.

networks present challenges to the establishment of civil and social organizations working towards democratic development. Olivier Roy observes that "traditional society" leaders will inhibit development of civil society by using "their own power and influence to appropriate for [them] the development programmes in order to re-install themselves as the 'real' people."[123]

Islamist movements also present a unique challenge to democratic activism because of its religious emphasis. These movements are among the most effective and well-organized social movement organizations in the Middle East. Replacing leftist political parties and national liberation movements of the twentieth century, the Islamists success is directly related to their adherence to the basic tenets of an effective social movement organization structure; they are well established in society, recognize the value of organization, and "are able to mobilize considerable constituencies."[124] These attributes, however, are concerning for many Arab, secular and Western governments because of the uncertainty associated with the "Islamic" portion of Islamist movements. Many terrorists and extremist organizations use Islam as a platform for jihad or espousing a return to an Islamic Caliphate, which has created uneasiness towards any form of political Islam. Jillian Schwedler notes that the recent distinction between "moderate" and "radical" Islamists, where the former is willing to work within the existing political system and the latter through revolution, has helped to dispel much of the mystery associated with Islamism.[125] Another challenge associated with Islamists is the United States' involvement in support for democratic activism and transition in the region. Democratic support or overtures by the United States is often view as propaganda and

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[123] Olivier Roy, "The Predicament of 'Civil Society' in Central Asia and the Greater Middle East," *International Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2005): 1006–1008. Roy defines "traditional society" as the networks of solidarity, based on primordial communities, kinship and patronage, that allow the population to resist encroachment from a strong authoritarian state, or to compensate for the weakness or corruption of the state.

[124] Nathan Brown, Amr Hamzawy, and Marina Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones," *Carnegie Papers: Middle East Series* 67 (2006): 5.

[125] Jillian Schwedler, "Islamic Identity: Myth, Menace, or Mobilizer?" *SAIS Review, A Journal of International Affairs* 21, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2001): 6–7.

disingenuous due to their continued support for authoritarian regimes and the "negligible resources allocated to democratization relative to those spent on… military initiatives" in the region.[126]

E.   CONCLUSION

The evolution of social movement theory provides a necessary background for the understanding of what motivates people to collective act together in pursuit of a common interest or goal. While the reasons for mobilization vary, there emerged a distinct set of advantages that inspired individuals towards collective action; grievances and their impact on a population, communication to both the public and the authorities, and the effectiveness of an organization to address with the authorities. Grievances must be localized and directly affect potential participants in order for them to risk participation. Additionally, organizations must be able to communicate these injustices to other effected populations, as well as to the authorities. The ability of an organization to effectively operate is directly related to the strength of its structure, resources, and organization. Social movement organizations and civil society are also a critical element to the formation and sustainment of democracy. They provide the membership, resources, networks, and collective experience from working together as an organization. While there are many challenges to democracy formation in the Middle East—colonial legacy, competing networks, and the role of Islam—there are established social organizations, which offer the potential for reform.

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[126] Carrie Wickham, "The Problem with Coercive Democratization: The Islamist Response to the U.S. Democracy Reform Initiative," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 1, no. 1 (2004): 2.

IV.   SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE MEDIA

There is a critical link between the media, social movement organizations, and democratic activism.   The media plays an important role for social movement organizations by advertising their grievances, promoting internal and external communication, influencing the action of authorities, and providing a forum for setting an agenda for debate.   Additionally, the media is also an integral part of the "dynamics of democratization by reducing the isolation of movements for political change and by facilitating detours around obstructions created by governments."[127]   Similarly, social movements are an appropriate organization to implement and maintain democracy because they rally around issues and grievances that impact the populace, highlight localized issues and injustices, and possess the resources, organization, and skills necessary to effectively address the authorities.   Naomi Sakr acknowledges that "freedom on information should be a catalyst for all aspects of development by creating public awareness and encouraging transparent decision-making" while at the same time "increasing the channels through which information flows."[128]   These mutually beneficial links provide opportunity, space, and efficient resource management.

A.   SOCIAL MOVEMENT MEDIA STRATEGIES

What strategies are employed by social movement organizations to frame and communicate their messages in a particular media environment?   Social movements utilize a variety of strategies to effectively communicate their message within the media. The decision on how movements communicate their message depends, in part, on the social, political and media environment in which they operate.   Social movements utilize three different media strategies to communicate their views to both the internal participants within their organization and to the larger, broader external audience.   First, social movements will work to reform the mainstream media in order to present an

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[127] Seib, "New Media and Democratization," 2.

[128] Naomi Sakr, "Satellite Television and Development in the Middle East," *Middle East Report* 210 (Spring 1999): 6.

impartial and open-minded presentation of news coverage. Movements must work to alter the various influences—government, economic, special interest—that shape the media's coverage and framing of issues. This is a time consuming process and, as Peter Brinson acknowledges, "is a long term strategy and [therefore] may not be appealing to many social movements."[129] Second, movements will work within the existing media structure in an attempt to gain attention and communicate their views. The success of organizations to present their frame of a particular issue or event in the media, however, is directly related to their "resources, organization, professionalism, coordination, and strategic planning of a movement."[130] Organizations must continually establish and develop relations and connections and work to construct a message that is beneficial to both the movement and the media. Finally, social movement organizations may "circumvent mainstream media altogether by using alternative media to communicate."[131] Brinson suggests that this may be the preferred strategy because social movement organizations can produce and frame their own media coverage, locate and identify other outlets and organizations sympathetic to their cause, and utilize emerging technologies, such as the internet or other evolving technologies, to altogether bypass mainstream mediums.[132] Social movement organizations can use alternate media forms to communicate messages to a wider audience without overt repression from authorities. For example, in response to an increasingly hostile media environment and other repressive measures, Islamists are utilizing the internet to communicate information, promote media activism, and support candidates in elections.[133] Pete Ajemian recognizes that new media—such as internet networking and blogs—in repressive environments allow for "individual grass roots political journalism [which] facilitates the creation of a counter-public sphere of discourse that has the potential to penetrate mainstream

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[129] Brinson, "Liberation Frequency," 547.

[130] Gamson and Wolfsfeld, "Movements and Media as Interacting Systems," 121.

[131] Brinson, "Liberation Frequency," 544.

[132] Ibid., 546.

[133] Pete Ajemian, "The Islamist Opposition Online in Egypt and Jordan," *Arab Media and Society*, no. 4 (Winter 2008), http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=577.

media."[134] Ultimately, regardless of the strategies utilized by social movement organizations, success will be measured based upon whether the frames portrayed are viewed as favorable by the targeted audience or participants.

Given the various strategies employed by social movement organizations, does the media provide coverage that benefits a social movement organization? Peter Brinson notes that media coverage can aid or deter in mobilization, provide an opportunity for SMOs to enter into public debate or discussion, effect internal and external movement dynamics, alter movement trajectories, and influence actions by authorities.[135] The methods and strategies that a social movement utilizes to communicate its message, however, will depend largely upon both the media and political environment in which it operates. Additionally, social movements need the media in order to reach their constituents, legitimate their issues, and to enlarge the scope of their message.[136] Those who advocate working within the existing media structure generally view the media—mainstream or otherwise—as a necessary means to generate exposure and create opportunity for social movement organizations. The coverage that the media provides also works to validate the movement's status as a credible organization, while at the same time legitimizing their grievances and concerns. The media also provides an essential medium to communicate a particular movement's message to a wide audience. While the "ownership and consumption patterns" of the mainstream media are established and usually more resistant to conform to the demands of change, their "content and programming are far more dynamic," which, subsequently, becomes a potential opportunity for social movement organizations to target.[137] As Carroll and Ratner conclude, "social movement organizations must overcome or at least cope creatively with

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[134] Ajemian, "The Islamist Opposition Online in Egypt and Jordan."

[135] Brinson, "Liberation Frequency," 544–545.

[136] Gamson and Wolfsfeld, "Movements and Media," 116.

[137] William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, "Framing Political Opportunity," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 287.

their asymmetrical dependency upon the mass media if they are to be successful."[138] Ultimately, ownership and consumption patterns are constraints that movements must learn to endure and operate within while simultaneously working to integrate their message into the existing media's format.

Social movement organizations can utilize the media to exploit and capitalize upon repressive actions conducted by authorities. Hess and Martin's work on the phenomenon of repression and backfire highlight a more subtle approach for social movements to use the media to their advantage. Backfire is a "public reaction of outrage to an event that is publicized and perceived as unjust" and it usually occurs "around censorship, police brutality, or other kinds of repressive events that are perceived as unjust and generate public concern."[139] Backfire creates a situation where authorities are forced to acknowledge and defend their actions, which the general public may perceive as either excessive or repressive. This creates what Hess and Martin term as "legitimation battles" between authorities and movement leaders and generates a potential opportunity for social movement organizations to exploit to their advantage. The opportunities these "battles" create become critical to a movement's existence as it "may defuse public opposition or open political opportunities for mobilization."[140] The media plays a critical role as it provides the coverage, communicates the information, and arbitrates the various actions and episodes on both sides to the general audience.

What type of media coverage benefits social movement organizations and civil society that are working towards democratic activism? The media must cover events and issues that directly affect the population. The media's coverage of local, contentious issues and events serves to inform the public. This creates recognition of grievances and issues among the affected community while also serving as notification to those in power of the debate. Social movements can aid the media by utilizing collective resources and skill in order to present their frame and establish an agenda, which is beneficial to their

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[138] William K. Carroll and R. S. Ratner, "Media Strategies and Political Projects: A Comparative Study of Social Movements, *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1999), 26.

[139] David Hess and Brian Martin, "Repression, Backfire, and the Theory of Transformative Events," *Mobilization* 11, no. 2 (June 2006): 249–250.

[140] Ibid., 249.

cause. While the frame may be altered, both the media and social movements need to be proactive in setting an agenda that will be beneficial towards democratic transition.[141] The organizational and skill level of a movement is directly related to the way it is perceived by both a prospective audience and the media; better equipped and prepared organizations have an increased opportunity in producing a preferred frame. Additionally, the lack of media coverage on contentious issues is also a tactic that can benefit social movements. By remaining silent on issues that detract from a particular movement's message, groups "can position itself as a moderate voice in a polemic debate and, in turn, bolster its political and public legitimacy."[142]

Do the media undermine the efforts, agendas, and frames that benefit social movement organizations? Social movements participate or stage events—such as protests, sit-ins, and demonstrations—in part to attract attention to their grievances and recruit those sympathetic to their cause. They often rely on the media as the vehicle to broadcast these episodes, which will, ideally, provide coverage that will benefit both their organization's agenda and membership. The media's coverage of these events, however, often counteracts or undermines social movements because of inherent media "logics that are independent of and often contradictory to movement agendas."[143] Selection bias—the media's presentation of only a small set of events from a larger collection—and description bias—the way an event is presented—forms the "logics" that work against social movements.[144] Additionally, social movements also have trouble distinguishing and advertising their organization amongst the many narratives, symbols, and frames portrayed by other competing organizations; this further complicates matters as movements try to navigate through the various biases present in the media. The wide

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[141] Kai Hafez, "Arab Satellite Broadcasting: Democracy without Political Parties?" Transnational Broadcasting Studies, no. 15 (Fall 2005), http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall05/Hafez.html. Hafez specifically argues that transnational and satellite broadcaster in the Middle East need to be proactive in the creation and presentation of agendas that are beneficial to democratic transition.

[142] Deana A. Rohlinger, "Friends and Foes: Media, Politics, and Tactics in the Abortion War," *Social Problems* 53, no. 4 (2006): 539.

[143] Jackie Smith, John D. McCarthy, Clark McPhail, and Boguslaw Augustyn, "From Protest to Agenda Building: Description Bias in Media Coverage of Protest Events in Washington, D.C.," *Social Forces* 79, no. 4 (June 2001): 1398–1399.

[144] Ibid., 1400–1401.

variety of media resources has made it "extremely difficult, perhaps unimaginable, for an opposition movement to define itself and its world view, to build up an infrastructure of self-generated cultural institutions, outside the dominant culture."[145]   These challenges impact a social movement organizations ability to effectively operate in certain media environments.

B.   SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE MIDDLE EAST MEDIA

How is the Arab media evolving from its problematic past into a credible and reliable medium for information? The introduction of new communication technologies into the Middle East region has begun to rapidly transform the media landscape. Specifically, satellite communication, the internet, and wireless devices have forced both Arab regimes and media outlets to reconsider their respective roles given society's greater access to information. With information pouring in from across the region and from around the world, Arab regimes can no longer monopolize or control the flow of information to both their people and the greater global audience. Whereas newspaper and terrestrial radio and television were easily monitored and controlled for content, the rapidly evolving communication technologies seemingly have no boundaries. Writing specifically about the impact of the media on the "new Arab public," Marc Lynch notes that "it has already conclusively shattered the state's monopoly over the flow of information, rendering obsolete ministries of information and the oppressive state censorship."[146] These innovations alone, however, cannot bring about vast changes and, as Philip Seib notes "it's important to resist the temptation to assume that technology can, in and of itself, transform political reality."[147] Media frames, public engagement, and well-placed resources, among other necessary requirements, must be actively engaged in order to stimulate the social and democratic change process.

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[145] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1980), 2–3.

[146] Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public*, 2.

[147] Seib, "New Media and Prospects for Democratization," 1.

In what ways can the media in the Middle East bring about democratic activism and change? Media provides people the medium in which messages and information are transmitted and received. There are a variety of factors that will determine how the information is communicated; political, social, and economic issues all help determine how information is being received and transported. Thus, media becomes the medium to connect individuals or groups, who share similar interests and goals, together. In the Middle East, this is consequential given the nature of Arab regimes with respect to their control of the media. Philip Seib notes that in restricted environments, "freer movement of information… works against repressive sovereignty of this kind and improves prospects for democratization."[148] Media and the information it transports alone, however, will not bring about democracy or social change. Information, no matter how it is transported, "has to be used creatively and with an eye to its relationship with other social and political institutions" in order to create change.[149]

The Arab media has also evolved from its post-independence period, where the media—both print and broadcast—was used to propagate messages that supported the government's goals in an effort to strengthen these fairly new and unstable regimes. Studies conducted during the 1970s indicated that issues of pan-Arabism and "ideologies propagating anti-imperialism, as well as development plans" were the predominant frames in the Arab media.[150] With the introduction of new media outlets, mediums, and technologies, story frames and issues have shifted toward other themes. Newer studies indicate that issues of "proximity (geographical and cultural), protocol news, and personification" are the frames commonly found in the Arab media.[151] The noted shift from ideology-based frames, which solely benefited the regime in power to the news that reported on the happenings of the state - though lacking significant critical components— is a positive shift.

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[148] Seib, "New Media and Prospects for Democratization," 3.

[149] Ibid., 9.

[150] Mellor, *The Making of Arab News*, 75.

[151] Ibid., 76.

C.   MIDDLE EAST MEDIA AND THE PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY

What issues and events do the Arab media cover? Violence and war by regional and international actors in the Middle East has come to define the images and coverage of the Arab media over the past several years. Palestinian-Israeli violence, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, events of September 11, 2001, the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war and other similar events has "dominated the regional agenda" in the Middle East.[152] While local issues are covered, the predominance of the coverage is focused on regional issues. Regional issues are presented by media outlets for a couple reasons. First, they are the issues, which are common and shared among the Arab audience. The findings from the 2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion poll support this as the war in Iraq, Palestinian divisions, Iranian nuclear program, the Arab–Israeli conflict, and the Lebanese crisis were the most important issues identified among Arabs surveyed for the poll.[153] Additionally, regional satellite stations were the most watched among Arab audiences, as *al Jazeera* maintained the largest share of the Arabic news market for both viewership and news choice with *al Arabiya* making significant gains from previous years.[154] Second, Arab regimes allow coverage of regional issues because it deflects attention away from problems within their country. Kai Hafez notes that the prevalence of the pan-Arab coverage on the Arab satellite networks averts attention away from regimes by broadcasting "injustices arising from Israeli or American policy and their militaries, while often downplaying the responsibilities of Arab states."[155] When coverage becomes too critical of their regimes, Arab governments take action against satellite stations. The Jordanian Information Ministry, for example, closed al Jazeera's bureau for "provoking sedition in the kingdom" and "defaming the royal family" after televising an interview,

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[152] Lynch, "Political Opportunity Structures," 23.

[153] Saban Center for Middle East Policy, "Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development University of Maryland/Zogby International 2008 Annual Public Opinion Survey," http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/events/2008/0414_middle_east/0414_middle_east_telhami.pdf.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Hafez, "Arab Satellite Broadcasting."

which criticized Jordan and the royal family.[156] In Yemen, the Information Minister threatened to close al Jazeera's bureau for "broadcasting stories that are hostile to Yemen, its unity, security, and stability."[157] Despite these, the pan-Arab frame portrayed in the media is the preferred frame as it reflects common issues and interests, which are shared by the broader Arab audience. As Lynch and other suggest, "whether for ideological reasons or for market reasons, the main satellite television stations have structured a news agenda that emphasizes an overarching Arab identity.[158] Rami G. Khouri comments that while the regional media broadcasts debates "about hot issues of the day, such as Palestine, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon-Syria, American-Arab relations, Islamism, secularism, women's rights, and others… they do not have significant impact on Arab political culture or decision-making by the Arab elites… because they [media] are divorced from the political process."[159] Khouri also notes that debating these issues "retard rather than promote real Arab democratization by providing a safety valve and a release of tension and emotions through the illusion of mass media liberalism."[160]

Despite the attention given to regional and Pan-Arab issues, local and domestic matters are covered in the Middle East media. Local issues are covered and presented to the Arab audience; however, they are presented alongside "the wider regional themes," providing visibility to not only the local audience "but to all other Arabs."[161] Kenneth J. Cooper's study of the coverage of local and domestic issues in the Egyptian press highlights the disparity between the issues covered by various media types—primarily publicly and privately owned outlets. Journalists in the privately owned media—despite their self-censorship—viewed their role as a government watchdog thereby focusing

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[156] Reporters without Borders, *Al-Jazeera Office in Amman Shut Down*, August 8, 2002, http://en.rsf.org/jordan-al-jazeera-office-in-amman-shut-08-08-2002,03321.html.

[157] BBC Worldwide Monitoring, *MP Calls for Closing al-Jazeera TV's Office in Yemen over "Hostile" Reporting*, July 13, 2009, LexisNexis Academic, http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.nps.edu/hottopics/lnacademic.

[158] Lynch, "Political Opportunity Structures," 23.

[159] Rami G. Khouri, "Arab Satellite TV: News without Impact, *The Jerusalem Post*, May 13, 2001.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Lynch, "Political Opportunity Structures," 24.

stories on corruption, crime, and protests.[162] The state-run newspapers, however, viewed their role as national advocate and advanced stories on the government's progress in education, health, housing, labor, and support for Islam.[163] This suggests that the state-run media advances the government's narrative on progress and provision of services, while the private media counters through coverage of dissent, corruption, and crime. Reporting on local issues, especially those that counter the regime's narrative or official stance can be costly as journalists across the region are repressed, censored, or imprisoned when attempting to perform the watchdog role. In Saudi Arabia, the editor-in-chief of the daily paper *Al-Madina* was dismissed after publishing a poem that criticized the Saudi legal system.[164] The Syrian government imprisoned journalist Ali Al-Abdallah for over 30 months for criticizing Syria's relations with Iran and calling for renewed relations with Lebanon.[165] In Yemen, journalists are subject to dismissal, arrest, and violence for reporting on corruption, embezzlement, or criticize the policies of the government.[166] These are significant because as journalists and media outlets try to perform the watchdog role on their respective governments, Arab regimes continually block the media's efforts to act as a fourth estate. In these cases, the media satisfies the requirements for aiding democracy; however, in authoritarian countries, the media may be necessary but it is not sufficient.

Why will the current frames and coverage in the Arab media not promote social movements or democratic activism? There are two issues that impede the media's development into a vehicle for democracy and democratic activism. First, the media is catering to a market demand for coverage of regional issues. Arab public opinion surveys and polls—such as the series conducted by the Brookings Institute—demonstrate

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[162] Kenneth J. Cooper, "Politics and Priorities: Inside the Egyptian Press," *Arab Media and Society*, no. 6 (Fall 2008), http://www.arabmediasociety.com/topics/index.php?t_article=225.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Reporters without Borders, *Editor Sacked after Publishing Poem Criticizing Judges*, March 22, 2002, http://en.rsf.org/saudi-arabia-editor-sacked-after-publishing-22-03-2002,00841.html.

[165] Reporters without Borders, *Authorities Refuse to Free Journalist on Completion of Sentence, Bring New Charges*, June 18, 2010, http://en.rsf.org/syrie-authorities-refuse-to-free-18-06-2010,37766.html.

[166] Reporters without Borders, *New Threats to Press Freedom in Yemen*, August 3, 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4c5ab4f9c.html.

that the various contentious regional issues are of great concern to the Arab audience and subsequently create a market demand. While the Arab audience is creating a demand for the coverage of these types of issues, this does not mean that there is not a demand for coverage of local issues and events. Second, and more importantly, Arab regimes actively obstruct the media through repression and intimidation. In Jordan, for example, "freedom of expression is restricted, and those who violate redlines regarding the royal family and certain societal taboos face arrest, causing widespread self-censorship" among journalists and media outlets.[167] Additionally, the Jordanian government retains the power to close newspapers and magazines, actively intimidates journalists, block internet sites, and intimidate authors who air critical regime views.[168] In Saudi Arabia, the government actively exerts pressure on the local media, expels foreign correspondents or dismisses journalists and editors when they become too critical, and employs restrictive media laws to ensure there is no "criticism of the royal family or individual royals" or "calls for substantial change to the political system."[169] The repressive actions by Arab regimes on the media's ability to report on localized issues create significant challenges to establishing viable democratic activism.

The recent emergence of the Arab media has stimulated lively debate and discussion among an energetic audience. This has caused optimism among many observers—both Arab and Western—about the democratic implications with respect to the media in the region. Prospects for an engaged "public sphere," similar to that of the eighteenth century salons and coffeehouses of Western Europe, cause many to consider the possibility of an Arab equivalent. An engaging Arab dialogue alone, however, will not propel civil society into democratic activism. As Lynch notes, "the public sphere does not depend on the existence of democracy" in order to subsist.[170] Many of the issues that unite the Arab community and define their shared identity across the region—and the

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[167] Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2010—Jordan*, May 3, 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4c0ceaeac.html.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Freedom House, *Countries at the Crossroads 2010—Saudi Arabia*, April 7, 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4be3c8d40.html.

[170] Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public*, 33.

world—provide the material for these popular debates; Israel-Palestine, terrorism, Islam, and American foreign policy in the region. While public debate and public space are important to the process, so, too, are the issues that inform and define these debates. As such, the issues the media chooses to cover are critical to the formation and shaping of these discussions. As in the Western European cases, the issues need to have a direct influence on the participants of the debate so that the grievances can be communicated to not only those in power, but to other members of the community who are equally affected. An enlightened community is more likely to participate in civil society in order to address the grievances generated by the authorities.

Given the current bias towards coverage of Pan-Arab issues and regional conflicts, the current media environment in the Middle East does not support social movements or civil society. Local coverage of issues provides organizations opportunities to serve notice to aggressors and connect aggrieved individuals or networks together to garner movement strength. The transnational media brought the prospect of providing "local viewers with news of… local affairs that information ministries were responsible for hushing up."[171] Despite the growth of transnational and regional media outlets over the past several years, there is insufficient coverage of local issues that could motivate an aggrieved audience to action or provide opportunities for civil society. Many of the same reasons that excite scholars over the prospects of an energized Arab media bringing democracy to the region are also that same that keeps it away. War, famine, labor migration, and other events in the past that have caused a "widespread displacement of people and re-creation of communities with shared ethnic identities or language in other settings has blurred social and national identities," with the media serving as an information bridge to connect the separate communities.[172] The media is also not wholly to blame for their lack of focus on issues that promotes democracy. The consumption of the transnational media by Arabs will impede the media's ability to impact democratic development. The demand created by citizenry for the type of programming offered by the transnational media suggests that the "new media is trying to cater to the market" and

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[171] Sakr, *Satellite Realms,* 4.

[172] Ibid., 6–8.

"understand that no one is going to watch them especially given the… dozens of choices."[173]   Additionally, the satellite media's presentation of events from an Arab perspective provides credibility to the Arab audience and is what continues to attract them to the medium.[174]   The media's focus on regional issues connects displaced communities, on the one hand, while simultaneously overlooking events that could benefit Arabs in the pursuit of democracy, on the other.

D.   CONCLUSIONS

There is a critical link between the media, civil society, and democratic activism. The public dialogue and space created by transnational media outlets in the Middle East has caused many to contemplate its role in democratic transition.   The media alone, however, cannot create change; "it has to be used creatively and with an eye to its relationship with other social and political institutions."[175]   The issues and events covered by the Arab media, however, do not provide a significant bridge to connect the three and provide an impetus for change.   Social movement organizations must learn to work in existing media and political environments to capitalize on opportunities and achieve and their goals.   At the same time, there must be a deliberate effort by the media to develop an agenda that is supportive of civil society and social movement organizations.   This will be a challenge as Arab regimes continue to resist, restrictive laws and measures remain in place, and audience consumption continues to drive the demand for the programming.

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[173]Shibley Telhami, Interview with Palestinian Broadcasting Service, May 14, 2002, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june02/images_5-14.html.

[174] Khamis, "The Role of the New Arab Satellite Channels," 41.

[175] Seib, "New Media and Democratization," 9.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. INTRODUCTION

A congressional research report written in 2003 outlined issues that should be concerning to U.S. foreign policy interest in the Middle East. Specifically, al Jazeera's coverage of issues relating to Iraq, Afghanistan, the War on Terrorism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[176] Further, the report offered suggestions for U.S. policy makers to consider when countering al Jazeera's "slick, entertaining format" and its ability to "project subtly its pan-Arab, pan-Islamist approach" in the Middle East.[177] The report highlights the complex nature of U.S. policy towards Arab media outlets. Suggestions ranged from solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the favoring of more moderate Arab networks to the encouragement of purchasing commercial air time.[178] The report and its policy suggestions highlight two aspect of U.S. policy: the recognition of the importance of the Arab media and its lack of meaningful and effective policy strategies. The research in this thesis suggests that U.S. policy makers should formulate meaningful strategies that assist the Arab media in de-emphasizing regional conflicts while encouraging the reporting of local and national issues—specifically, those issues that aid in social movement and democratic development.

The media in the Middle East is in transition. It is slowly emerging from its state-dominated past to something that resembles Western media outlets. The increase in media outlets in the late-twentieth century coupled with the appearance of seemingly independent, satellite television stations encouraged many observers to contemplate the democratic potential these mediums could bring to the region. Despite breaking

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[176] Jeremy M. Sharp, "The Al-Jazeera News Network: Opportunity or Challenge for U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East." U.S. Congressional Research Service (RL31889; July 23, 2003), 6–11.

[177] Ibid., 12.

[178] Ibid., 12–14. While I did not list all of the policies recommend by Jeremy Sharp, one of his recommendations was the creation of an alternative Arabic language television network. While he does not specifically mention al Hurra in the report, the station began broadcasting its programming in February 2004 and appears to be one of the recommendations that were accepted. For an overview of al Hurra and U.S. policy towards the network, see Jeremy M. Sharp's "The Middle East Television Network: An Overview."

traditional press taboos and creating public space for ordinary Arabs to debate issues once too controversial for open discussion, the media has yet to generate significant pressure for democracy or aid in the sustainment of social movements. While these expectations have fallen short, all is not lost. There are many institutions, actors, and opportunities that must collaborate together to influence democratic transition. Additionally, democratic transitions do not occur overnight and require a great deal of time and patience for the process to mature. Policy makers must continue to support Arab media outlets—despite their anti-American rhetoric—and encourage their collaboration with social movement organizations and civil society in order to effectively pressure Arab regimes to begin the process of democratization.

B.   SUMMARY

In Chapter I, I summarized the importance of the media for policy makers when creating and implementing policies that effect societies, provided a review of available literature on the Arab media, discussed the critical link between social movement organizations and the media, and offered potential implications to the U.S. policy. The emergence of a transnational media in the mid-1990s, however, brought new messages that challenged Arab regimes, criticized U.S. foreign policy initiative, and created space for debate and discussion of issues that were once deemed taboo. Despite allegations of fomenting anti-American sentiment towards U.S. policy efforts, the Arab media can be a viable medium to aid social and democratic movements in the region. Policy makers need to look beyond this rhetoric and recognize the importance of the media in civil society and democratic activism.

The development and potential of the Arab media has yet to be explored in the scholarly literature. Much of the current literature focuses on the polarizing opinions and commentary featured on outlets, such as al Jazeera. Many confuse this commentary as democratic potential for the region while altogether ignoring other important aspects of the media. As such, there is a significant deficit in the literature on the media's coverage of issues and events and its potential impact to institutions and society working towards

democracy. Further research is needed in these areas in order to explore the Arab transnational media's role in creating and sustaining viable social movements and democratic activism.

Policy makers must recognize the critical link between media organizations and social movements and their role in developing and sustaining democratic activism. The media provides advertisement of issues, creates space for debate, and provides legitimacy to an organization. These links are critical in the development and sustainment of democratic activism. The Arab media, however, focuses on issues that unite and define Arabs as a community instead of covering issues that impact them at the local level. While this coverage is stimulating debate and creating opportunities for greater media freedoms, it is having minimal impact in benefiting movements and democratic development. It is important for policy makers to recognize these developments for two reasons. First, while the messages that appear may be conflict with popular American sentiment or public opinion, the flow of information is helping to open and expand Arab public space. Second, the regional and Pan-Arab issues that appear in the media do not support meaningful democratic development.

In Chapter II, I discussed the traditional role of the media in relation to creating and sustaining democracy and the development of the Arab media. In democracies, the media provides citizens with information on the health of its democracy. It communicates ideas, provides a venue for debate, transmits messages, and provides access to all citizenry. In the Western European tradition, the media's watchdog role on government for society was formalized in the coffeehouses and salons of eighteenth century society. As Western democracies continued to develop and mature, so too did the media. The media became an integral component of transitioning and sustaining democracy and evolved into its role as a fourth estate for its citizenry. Current media debates focus on the Western media's ability to effectively execute its role as a watchdog. Globalization, corporate ownership, and advertising revenues are some of the issues that are often cited as impediments to the media performing its traditional watchdog role. Curiously, many cite these same issues—globalization, ownership, and revenue—as responsible for continuing to preserve the media's role in society. The media also has

uses in non-democratic regimes and environments. It is used to communicate to the masses, mobilize the population in support of regime goals, and set policy; it is a one-way communication transaction from regime to the people.

The traditional role of the media in the Middle East, however, has stifled any similar democratic trajectory for the Arab media. Upon independence, weak Arab regimes inherited colonial media systems and subsequently used to them to stabilize their frail governments and fragile populations. The media's mobilizational potential alarmed Arab regimes, especially with the development of radio and television technologies. Permanent government entrenchment in the media developed as Ministries of Information and other bureaucracies were established to regulate content and oversee the media's agenda. The establishment of transnational media outlets in the mid-1990s, however, has changed some of the attitudes and practices of the Arab media. There is diversity in sources of information and content, which allows Arab audiences to choose from a variety of different media outlets. Media competition has boosted the quality and availability of Arab journalism. Most importantly, the transnational media has created public space to discuss and debate issues and seemingly created access for Arab audiences. This excites many observers because of the democratic implications involved when such space is created.

In Chapter III, I analyzed the reasons for mobilization through exploration of several social movement theories and the role of movements in democratic activism. While social movement theory continues to evolve over time, there a common elements of these theories that highlight the importance of social movements involvement in democratic activism. Grievances must be localized and impact potential movement participants; people need to feel aggrieved in order to risk movement participation. A movement's ability to effectively operate in repressive environments is directly related to the strength of its organization, amount of resources, and efficient structure. Participants will not join disorganized movements nor will authorities or other external actors—the media—respond to or assist in movement actions.

Social movements and civil society are critical elements to the creation and sustainment of democracy. They provide the resources, organization, structure, agenda,

and access to groups of aggrieved people that enable them to counter authorities and work towards common, democratic goals. Isolated or weak movements find value in associating with like-minded and better-equipped organizations. Civil society and social movements are appropriate vehicles for democratic activism because they spread their institutional values—respect for law, focus on individual rights, and organization—across society. These are effective in authoritarian environments because they provide structure and organization to effected individuals, networks, or groups.

Civil society and social movement organizations in the Middle East have yet to experience the success of organizations in other parts of the world. There are no democratic countries in the Middle East nor is there a tradition of democracy. There is a significant lack of viable social movements and a faltering civil society. Liberalization measures in the region resulted in Arab regimes co-opting these organizations to further exert their control rather than to implement institutional changes. Colonial legacies and tribal networks further complicate the region's ability to implement and sustain democracy and civil society. Islamist organizations, however, are generally among the most organized and adequately resourced organizations in the Middle East. They are adequately resourced, adeptly organized and can effectively mobilize groups and networks of people towards meeting organizational goals. Arab secular and Western governments, however, are weary of Islamist movements. The Islamic element of Islamist organizations creates an uncertainty for many governments and support groups, which has negatively impacted their ability to effectively operate in Arab society.

In Chapter IV, I explored the various media strategies that social movements employ and the connections between social movement organizations, democratic activism and the media. Social movements can benefit through interaction with various media outlets. The interaction between social movements and the media, however, is not always balanced. The media engages with a variety of different actors—governments, interest groups, and corporations—who are competing to set their preferred frames and agendas. Social movements, therefore, must adapt to the environment and employ

effective media strategies in order to successfully operate in these environments. The better resourced and organized, the better the chance for the movement to present their frame or agenda in the media's coverage.

Examination of the link that connects movements, democratic activism, and the media provides critical information on the prospects for change in non-democratic environments. There is a mutually beneficial relationship between social movement organizations and the media. The media benefits movements by advertising localized issues, creating space for debate, facilitating communication among internal participants and external actors, and providing legitimacy to an organization and its causes. Social movements facilitate democratic activism by providing the organization foundation and networks to adequately address authorities. Accordingly, in order for the media to specifically benefit social movements working towards democratic activism, they must cover localized issues that impact the affected population; this will connect similar groups of aggrieved people and networks while communicating to those responsible for the grievances to address the accusations.

The Arab media—both domestic and transnational—has yet to develop into an institution that is capable of providing the means to aid social movements and democratic activism. This is due to the Arab media's coverage of regional and Pan-Arab issues. The media's coverage of regional issues is enabled by a demand from the Arab audience—which are common and shared among Arabs—and the willingness of Arab regimes to allow broadcasting of these issues—these detract from local and domestic issues. While these have created public space and sparked debate in many of the transnational media outlets, it has done little to stimulate democratic activism or sustain viable social movement activity. The widespread migration of Arab people throughout the region has encouraged the marked demand for the transnational media to cover regional issues. Likewise, the terrestrial media markets are still subject to the censorship and control by the state's information ministries and bureaucracies; coverage is limited to reporting government achievements, cultural events, and ruling family sightings.

C.   LIMITS OF PRESENT STUDY

Academic research, theories, and theses rarely go unchallenged and I recognize that my offering is likely no exception. In an effort to recognize my deficiencies, I acknowledge several shortcomings in my approach to this study. First, the lack of investigation into the development and impact of alternative media sources—mainly personal display assistants (PDA), blogs, or other internet sites—and its ability to impact democratic activism. Second, the development, function, and effectiveness of the various associational media outlets, such as Hezbollah's al Manar, and its impact on movement sustainment. Finally, inadequate attention was given to specific actions by social movement organizations to create episodes and events that would gain attention by the Arab media.

The scope of my research was limited to terrestrial and transnational media outlets; my research does not adequately address the impact of alternative media sources—blogs, social networking sites, and mobile devices—on social movement sustainment and democratic development. These emerging mediums provide uncensored, near real-time reporting, and local coverage of issues and events without the biased filters found in traditional media sources. This was a deliberate decision to exclude alternative sources of information because these types of media are not subject to the same influences that effect domestic and satellite media outlets. These mediums require a different level of analysis and research in order to assess their impact on social movements and democratic development.

The formal media component of associational—religious, political, economic or any combination—organizations were not addressed in my research. Middle East media outlets, as do many other international media organizations, contain multiple biases, influences, and pre-dispositions, which impact the coverage and reporting of events. As part of my research, I identified reasons for many of these influences and used them to explain the Arab media's shortcomings with respect to providing impartial viewpoints, viable support for social movement organizations, and creating momentum for increased democratic activism. I did not include the media sections of associational groups because

of the inherent biases towards their organizations. Because Arabs obtain news and information from these outlets, research is warranted into their impact on movement sustainment and democratic development.[179] For my research, however, I chose to study the biases that are common among the majority of all Middle East media organizations.

As part of my research, I established that the media and social movement organizations have a mutually beneficial relationship. Some may criticize that I did not sufficiently analyze and assess the actions of Arab social movement organizations to create episodes or stage events that would aid the Arab media in selecting alternative frames to the ones offered by those in power. As previously discussed, social movement organizations do have a responsibility in creating an agenda that will attract the attention of the media in order to notify other participants and the authorities. The focus of my research, however, was to assess whether the Arab media was reporting the type of issues that would benefit social movement organizations and democratic activism.

D.   POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The media has a direct impact on the success of a social movement organization's ability to effectively transmit and receive messages in order to effect change in a given political, social, and economic environment. There is a mutually beneficial relationship between the media and social movement organizations; social movements set the agenda through organizing demonstrations, protests, and other collective actions while the media provides the means to communicate the undertaking to both a local and regional audience. Both groups—the media and social movement organizations—have critical responsibilities in this transaction. Social movements must have access to "resources, organization, professionalism, coordination, and strategic planning" in order to improve their standing and ensure its "preferred frame will be in the media coverage of relevant events and issues."[180] Equally, the media must also do its part in the maintenance of this relationship; "for the media to have a powerful impact on changes to the political system

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[179] Saban Center for Middle East Policy, "2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey." Both al Manar and al Hurra were selections in the "Media Viewership" portion of this survey, which suggests that a certain portion of Arabs do rely on these stations for news and event coverage.

[180] Gamson and Wolfsfeld, "Movements and Media as Interacting Systems," 121.

(and perhaps on democratization) it will be extremely important to improve their links to civil societies and the political opposition that… is poorly developed."[181] Kai Hafez also stresses that the structural changing of the media alone is not enough to change the political, social, or economic landscape; "new political and social movements" are necessary in order to interact with the Arab media.[182]

The research in this thesis provides several suggestions for policy makers to consider when dealing with democratic activism and civil society. First, the promotion and continued support of Arab social movements in the Middle East is suggested. As I will demonstrate, a well-organized and adequately resourced organization has a better chance of communicating their message to an appropriate audience. Second, policy makers must continue to support the free flow of information coming to and from Arab media outlets. While messages may often appear inflammatory or contrary to American public opinion and interests, continued promotion of the Arab media is essential in order to provide the means to for aggrieved communities to communicate to other like-minded groups and to responsible authorities. Additionally, policy makers need to recognize the importance of the media's reporting of local issues in the region and acknowledge its significance with respect to democratic activism. At the same time, policy makers need to de-emphasize the Arab media's often provocative coverage of greater regional issues—Palestinian-Israeli relations, terrorism, and other regional conflicts. Finally, there must be continued support for research efforts on the Arab media's coverage of issues. By continuing to monitor what the media is covering, policy makers will have a better understanding of the impact of social movements and provide a means to effectively analyze democratization efforts in the Middle East.

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[181] Hafez, "Introduction," 4.

[182] Ibid.

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